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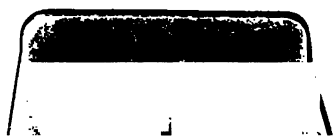
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# AT THE BAR.

*A Tale.*

BY

CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "A CRUISE UPON WHEELS," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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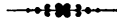
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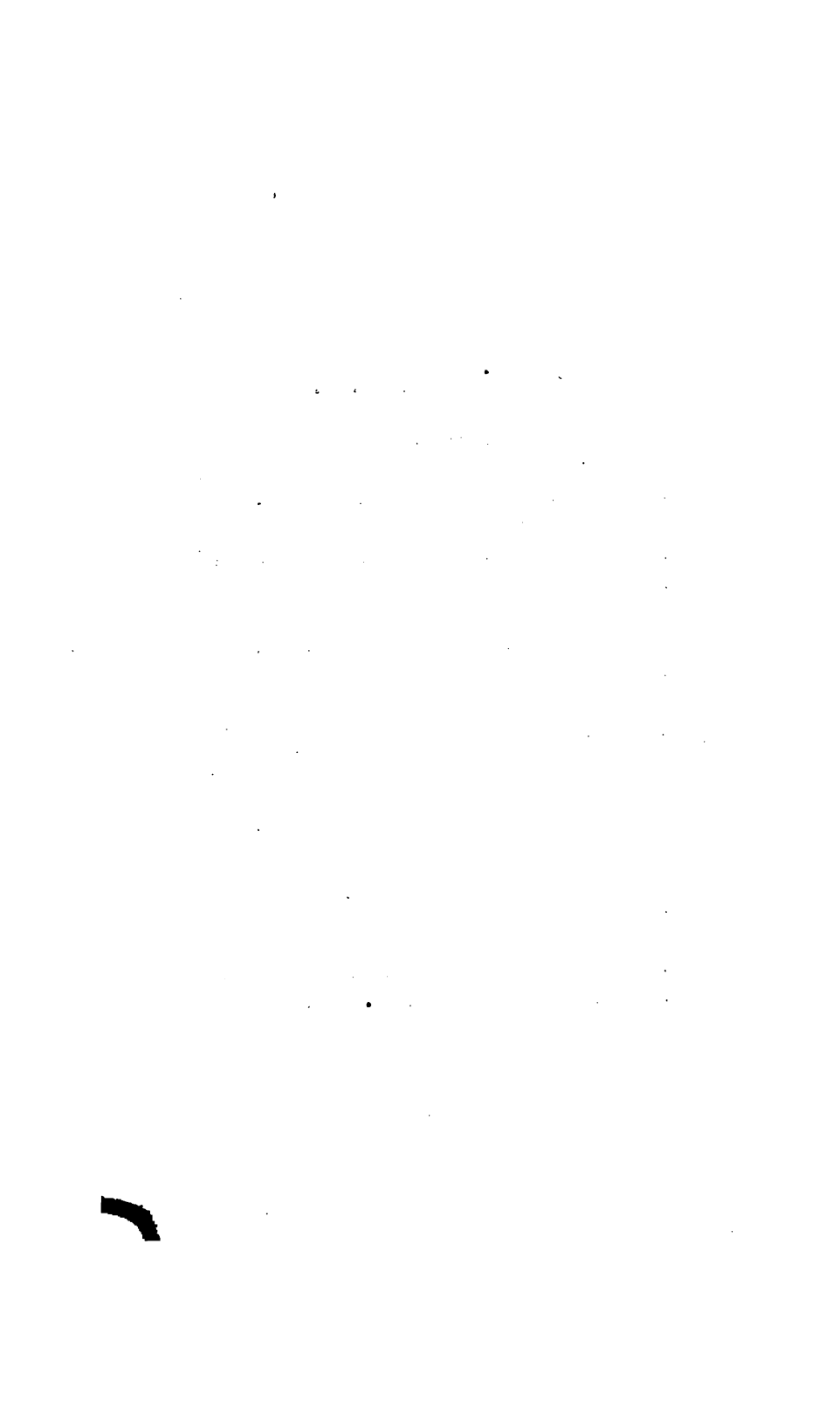
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# AT THE BAR.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE PERIL INCREASES.

AT the appointed hour on the afternoon of the eventful day with which we have been so long occupied, the doctor of the police force arrived, accompanied by a surgeon of some eminence, who was to assist Dr. Giles in his investigation.

It lasted some hours; and all the time there was a strange and ominous quiet about the house—a silence which no one cared to break.

At last it was announced that the work was accomplished, and that the doctors had come downstairs into the dining-room, and asked to speak with Mr. Penmore. He found

them looking very grave, and there was at first an awkward silence.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Penmore," began Dr. Giles at last, after introducing his colleague, a pale studious-looking gentleman in spectacles, "that both my friend Mr. Slade and myself have come, in consequence of the investigation in which we have just been engaged, to a somewhat painful conclusion. There must be an inquest."

"An inquest?" repeated Gilbert in some dismay. "Is there any doubt, then, about the cause of death?"

"I am afraid, Mr. Penmore," replied the doctor, "that, on the contrary, there is no doubt whatever that the cause of death has been the administration of poison."

"Of what?" cried Gilbert, surprised beyond all possibility of self-restraint.

"Of poison," repeated Dr. Giles gravely.

There was a dead silence for some minutes after this. Gilbert required time to collect himself a little; and no doubt both the doctors felt that this must be so, for they left him awhile undisturbed.

"What you have told me," said Gilbert, at last speaking in a low tone, "has so en-

tirely taken me by surprise, and the announcement is altogether so terrible, that I hardly know what I ought to say or do." He stopped for a time. "Have you found out what the poison was?" he asked presently.

"We have no doubt whatever that the poison which has been administered is opium. That is your opinion, too, Slade, is it not?"

"Beyond a doubt," replied Mr. Slade. "We have detected its presence quite unmistakably, and in somewhat large quantity."

Again there was silence. These men spoke with certainty and confidence; yet Gilbert could hardly realise that what they said was truth. At last he spoke again.

"Have you formed any opinion as to how or by whom this poison has been administered?"

Dr. Giles *had* formed an opinion, and a tolerably strong one too, in his own mind, but he could not bring himself to give it tongue. It was too dreadful to be put into words. His colleague was not slow in coming to his rescue.

"As to that," said Mr. Slade, "it would be impossible, and indeed extremely wrong as well, to form any conclusion, or even to

entertain a suspicion, till after the inquest has taken place."

"Quite impossible to say any thing till then," remarked Dr. Giles.

"And when shall that be?" asked Penmore.

"I think, if possible, it had better be to-morrow," said the doctor; "and unless you wish to put the affair in any other hands, I will see the coroner on the subject myself, and save you the trouble and annoyance."

"You are very kind. I will ask you to do so," said Gilbert.

"I think to-morrow will probably be the day appointed," continued Dr. Giles; "but you shall know in the course of the evening."

The two medical gentlemen rose to go; but at this moment the door opened, and Mrs. Penmore entered the room, followed closely by her evil genius Jane Cantanker.

Gabrielle made at once for the spot where her husband stood. She was deadly pale, and looked continually over her shoulder at this woman, with the appearance of one who is scared and terrified.

Both the doctors made way to allow Mrs. Penmore to pass.

"What is the matter, Gabrielle?" asked Penmore kindly; "I am afraid that this affair has frightened you terribly."

Gabrielle could only press her husband's arm. Her eyes were still fixed upon the woman who hated her.

"I wish to know," said this last, addressing the two doctors, "whether *she*"—and Cantanker pointed to Gabrielle—"is to be allowed to go at large?"

"Most unquestionably," replied both the medical authorities, speaking together. "How can you ask? There is nothing against her at present."

"'Nothing against her?' I tell you there is my word against her. I accuse her—here before you all. *You* know," continued the infuriated woman, turning to the doctor, "you know on what grounds I speak, and *on* these grounds I denounce this woman as guilty of having caused my mistress's death."

No person of those present heard these dreadful words unmoved. Both the doctors showed by their faces, and by gesture as well, that even to them, inured to scenes of wretchedness, this was no common case. For Gabrielle, a deadly sickness came upon her, and

with a faint cry, so weak as to be hardly audible, she clung to Gilbert for support. While as to Penmore himself all other feeling now seemed to be utterly lost and merged in one of furious and unmitigated indignation.

“What!” he cried, “is this to be allowed? Is this abominable and shameless woman to stand here before me, and in my own house accuse my own wife of a crime which, as connected with her, I cannot even bring myself to name? Have I no remedy but slow recourse to processes for libel and such creeping means of vengeance? Because she is a woman, I can use no force. I cannot tear out the very tongue with which she lies against this innocent. O! it is horrible to be so tied and bound—to stand by inactive and listen to such words. But what folly is this!” he said, checking himself the next moment. “To treat this matter seriously even for a moment is nothing less than folly of the wildest kind. The woman is mad; mad with grief—mad with hatred of my wife, which I could see she always entertained. Yes, she is mad; but it is a madness with which I cannot bear that my wife should come in

contact. Can she not be removed, sir?" he continued, addressing Dr. Giles.

"Nothing shall make me stir from this place," said this terrible woman, speaking for herself, "till I have seen *her* in the way of being brought to justice."

"I am afraid," said Dr. Giles, "that, whatever may be your own convictions as to this person's state of mind, her accusations have been so serious, and she has altogether gone so far in what she has asserted, that it will be necessary for all parties concerned that she should have a hearing, and that her story should be pronounced upon by some one who has the right to speak."

"And this you may rely on," the woman went on, "in spite of all your words of scorn and talking about madness, that when once I have got a hearing, it will be long enough before you hear the last of what I have to say. I tell you that your wife—and if she were twenty times your wife, or the highest lady in the land, it would make no difference, —I tell you she is guilty. Why, look," continued the illiterate wretch, "at what happened last night—*she* carrying up my mistress's food the last thing, and the poor angel



dead in the morning! Ah, you may well shrink, young woman; but you'll shrink more yet before I've done, I can tell you."

It was impossible that this woman's denunciation should be allowed to go on. Dr. Giles came forward now, and speaking to Jane Cantanker said:

"I think that it will be better for you to keep what you have to say till to-morrow, when you are certain of a hearing. You can do no good by speaking now." The good doctor was greatly distressed at the scene in which he was perforce taking part, and he felt that if any additional pain could be spared to this lady and gentleman—for such he perceived them to be—such vexation ought certainly to be averted. Mr. and Mrs. Penmore should be left alone at this time, he thought, to bear this trouble together.

"Come with me," he said, addressing the relentless woman once more; "I have some additional questions of importance which I should like to ask you."

"Begging your pardon, sir, I will answer your questions at another time. What I have to do now is to see that this person is brought to justice."

Gilbert felt his wife's arm tremble as these horrid words were spoken. It maddened him to hear them, and to think that it was possible that they could be said in earnest.

"I say that I will not have this," he cried. "If this madness is to have its way; if this woman is to be allowed to speak words which, if the subject were less terrible, one might almost smile at, at least it shall not be here in my own house, but elsewhere, and before some fitly constituted tribunal. In this house at least I am the master. I bid her leave this room; and if she refuses, as I cannot in this case use force, I, at least, will leave it and this lady with me, as I do not choose that my wife should any longer be brought in contact with a wretch who could speak such words against her."

"Which way is it to be?" continued Penmore, after waiting a moment. "Is she to go, or are we?"

The two doctors both came forward, and in earnest accents sought to turn this iron woman from her purpose.

She did not stir, however; and Gilbert, after giving her such time as he deemed

sufficient, drew his wife's arm through his, and without another word passed swiftly from the room.

It was some time after they had got away from the room below before either Gilbert or his wife uttered a word. Strange and terrible thoughts filled the minds of both of them. A new and dreadful impression was developing itself slowly. It was as if a scroll on which some fearful thing was written was being unrolled gradually before their terror-stricken eyes. What was written on that scroll was confused and unmeaning at first; but as they gazed the characters assumed a certain clearness and coherency, becoming at last intelligible. The forms seen dimly in the darkness took shape now; and grim and ghastly forms they were.

Gilbert was the first to break the silence.

"What did that dreadful woman mean?" he asked. "What—what," and here he hesitated in spite of himself—"was that she said about last night?"

The events of that past day and night were ranging themselves in order in Gabrielle's mind as her husband spoke. Every little thing that had taken place was being repeated before her mental vision.

"O Gilbert," she cried, "what have I done? I do not even dare to think of what may come of it."

"Come of what?" he repeated mechanically. He would not own to himself even that he knew.

"Of all that took place yesterday," continued Gabrielle,— "of the words that passed between us—the angry words, and then what followed. That last food which she partook of coming through my hands; and after that—her—her **DEATH**!"

Penmore could not repress a groan of anguish. With his quick perception and legal training, he could not help seeing how easily what had happened on the previous day might be misrepresented, and what a fearful strength of evidence might be accumulated against his wife.

"Will they kill me, Gilbert?" she asked. "What will they do to me?"

Her husband gazed at her as if hardly understanding what she said.

"They will suspect you,—that is what I fear," he answered at last. "The horrible coherency with which these things hang together may make them suspect you. And that is bad enough—bad enough," he repeated.

They sat side by side silent for a while, their cold hands locked together. There was much of the boy and girl about them still. They had sat so in the old West-Indian time when their first sorrow—the dread of separation—had come upon them.

The husband seemed now to be almost the greater sufferer of the two. From time to time a sort of shudder passed through all his frame. He seemed unable to help dwelling on those dreadful and damning circumstances.

“Great Heaven!” he cried, but faintly, and as if some hideous sight was revealed to his eyes; “what evidence in wicked hands!” And then he repeated, as if it were some dreadful refrain, these words: “The last food partaken of at night, by her who was to die before the morning.”

Gabrielle uttered a faint cry. The same thoughts which had passed through her husband’s mind were in hers also. Link by link the great chain of evidence which might be turned against her seemed to become developed before the eyes of both husband and wife.

“O Gilbert,” cried the latter, after a time, “you will not hate me for what I have

done. I don't mean what I have done—you can't hate me for that, because I only sought to make my peace with her—but for the dreadful consequences—the disgrace that may come of it. O Gilbert, darling, whatever I may have to suffer, let it not be in one way, dear—not in losing you, my love. You will still love me and trust me, whatever happens, will you not, and never let even one unkind thought come between us to separate us?"

Gilbert caught her in his arms before she could say more, and reassured her with such loving words as made her happy even in the midst of all this anxiety and misery. They were together, and they loved each other, and while this was so, they could not be utterly unhappy.

They sat silent and full of thought for some time, and might have continued so much longer had they not been disturbed by various strange noises below in the passage, and the sound of voices and of a suppressed sobbing.

## CHAPTER II.

### AFFECTIONATE RELATIVES.

It was just as the light was fading fast on the evening of this dreadful day that a cab heavily laden with luggage drove up to the door of the house in Beaumont Street. The head of a good-looking gentleman was thrust out of one of the windows of the vehicle; and then, as if he were impatient, his arm followed, and his hand turned the handle of the cab-door.

The contents of the cab seemed to indicate less that the occupant had come off a journey than that he was making a move from one place of residence to another; for although there were not wanting certain boxes and portmanteaus on the roof of the cab, that vehicle was also loaded both outside and in with a great many such nick-nacks as sofa-cushions, chimney-piece ornaments, large meerschaum pipes, and other similar articles, which people do not usually carry about with

them loose when travelling. Above all, there was in the interior of the cab a pair of very handsome kettle-drums; and about these the owner was so solicitous, that as soon as he was out of the conveyance he caused them to be brought out also and placed beside him on the stone before the door, which a moment afterwards was opened by no less a person than Jane Cantanker.

Mr. Lethwaite, whom the drums have doubtless already proclaimed to the reader, was so solicitous about these instruments that, without observing who had let him in, he at once bore them with the tenderest care into the house and deposited them in a place of safety behind the dining-room door.

"Are the rooms ready for me?" asked Lethwaite, turning round as soon as he thought the drums were safe, and not perceiving in the dusk of the evening whom he was addressing.

"No, sir, they are not," replied a voice, which Lethwaite recognised immediately; "and any thing so indecent as this I could not have believed would have taken place even in *this* ill-regulated house."

Mr. Lethwaite stood in great fear of Cantanker. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure," he



said, with his native politeness. "I'm extremely sorry. I was told to come to-day."

"O yes, no doubt: *they* knew what was going to happen, and they didn't want to have their rooms unlet for so much as a single hour. But it's all of a piece—it's all of a piece. There you had better go upstairs, hadn't you, and take your drums with you? You'll find them up there as you won't easily disturb. O Lord, O Lord! that I should live to see this day!" And the wretched woman burst into a fit of suppressed sobbing, and disappeared down the kitchen-stairs.

It was an unfortunate coincidence this, truly. Gilbert had told his friend that the rooms would be vacant, and had appointed him to come; and then, in the agitation and confusion of what had happened since, had forgotten all about it, as well he might. It was unfortunate too that the door should have been opened on this occasion by Cantanker herself. The fact is, that she had been waiting for some time in the passage expecting the arrival of *something*,—something that generally arrives in the dusk of the evening—the last piece of furniture that any of us have need of in this world. Expecting that, she had

opened the door, and there she had found Mr. Lethwaite with his drums. In this world the grotesque intrudes every where cheek-by-jowl with the terrible; and no true narrator of earthly sorrows is he who denies that ghastly element its place.

The noise made by the arrival of Lethwaite's luggage, the sound of voices and sobbing, had, as we have seen, reached—for sound travels easily in cheaply-built houses—to the room where Gilbert and his wife were sitting.

Penmore came out upon the landing to ascertain what new thing was amiss; and hearing Lethwaite's voice, the memory of what he had told his friend about the rooms being ready for a new tenant on this very day flashed upon him, and in one moment he understood what was going on below.

He went downstairs at once, and found Julius Lethwaite in the passage, ignorant still of what had happened, and entirely confused and bewildered at the reception which he had met with.

"Good Heavens! Penmore," he cried, alarmed, as well he might be, at his friend's altered appearance, "what can be the matter?"

It was soon told. It was not indeed ne-

cessary to speak of those alarming presentiments with which Gilbert and his wife had just been occupied. Time enough for these when it should be proved that there was ground for such apprehensions; time enough to-morrow, when the jury should have assembled, and pronounced their verdict. It was enough now to tell the sad story of Miss Carrington's sudden death, together with the cause to which that death was attributed by the medical men.

Lethwaite was sincerely distressed at what he heard. He foresaw hindrance and trouble and inconvenience—though of course at present nothing more—for his friend; and his offers of service were so anxiously put, that Penmore actually gave him some small commission to execute, in order to set him at rest.

Julius Lethwaite was a man of infinite tact, and he saw in a moment that just for the moment the kindest thing he could do would be to go. So in a very few minutes the cab which had deposited him in Beaumont Street was loaded again, and he was soon on his way—drums and all—back to the place from whence he came, and where he knew that he could still find shelter for the present.

And there were many demands made now upon Penmore's attention, which served perhaps usefully to distract it from those melancholy forebodings which had taken such a hold upon his mind. First came a messenger to announce that the coroner would hold an inquest on the morrow at a neighbouring public-house at two o'clock in the afternoon. The jury would have to visit the house in Beaumont Street, and it was requested that all things might be in readiness for their reception.

Soon after this message had been received Captain Scraper made his appearance. Rumours of what had happened had reached him, and the boarding-house, where it will be remembered the deceased lady had several friends, was all in commotion about the affair. Captain Scraper took a very important tone; and, horrible as it seems to say so, actually appeared to have a great relish for what was going on, and to find considerable consolation in uttering a great many big phrases about its being a "most mysterious affair," and as to the "necessity of investigation." And he even seemed to be disposed to give Gilbert himself a hint or two as to what had best be

his own course of conduct, and how it would be right for him to "communicate at once with the late Miss Carrington's relations," and to "lose no time in applying to her men of business, whoever they might be," without once pausing to inquire whether or no some such steps might already have been taken. There was a certain quiet dignity, however, about the manner in which Penmore informed the Captain that all these things which he had been kind enough to suggest had already been attended to, which had a considerable effect in subduing the military gentleman's tone. Gilbert Penmore was the kindest and gentlest creature breathing; but from the moment that he had reason to suspect that any one was taking a liberty with him, he became a very different person, and very difficult to deal with.

And lastly, the Captain being disposed of, came no less a person than Mr. Jephson, of the firm of Jephson and Field, Miss Carrington's solicitors. Mr. Jephson, it will perhaps be remembered, was one of that party of attorneys whom Julia Lethwaite had got together to meet our hero, and who had laughed at his foreign accent, as did the rest.

The information brought by this asthmatic gentleman was not altogether satisfactory. He knew of no will. If there was one, it must be among Miss Carrington's papers that had been in her own possession. There certainly was none among the documents in the possession of the firm which he represented. At the proper time it would of course be necessary to make an examination of the deceased lady's papers, with a view to the discovery of a will. In the event of no such document being found, her property would go to her next of kin.

A new source of uneasiness became revealed to Gilbert Penmore as these last words dropped casually from the attorney's lips. To the best of Gilbert's knowledge, he himself and his own immediate relatives would turn out to be the very persons thus alluded to; and if this benefit should actually accrue to him from Miss Carrington's death, here would be more ground at once for those suspicions which had been insinuated by Jane Cantanker,—a new link, in short, in that horrible chain which circumstance seemed to be winding around his poor Gabrielle, encroaching, like the coils of a serpent, on her free-

dom, and even—on what besides?—on her life?

O, truly it might be so—who could tell? who could say whither all these cruel indications were tending, or in what direction they pointed?

This new feature in the case did really seem to be all that was wanting to complete it as a piece of the strongest circumstantial evidence that could be conceived. Here was additional motive for a crime brought forward in the shape of profit to be obtained by its commission. Before this new element had been introduced, the motive which might have been alleged was purely of a vindictive character, but now here was a distinct advantage to be gained by the death of this unfortunate lady. Her life stood between a certain person and gain, and that life had been successfully assailed by a dose of poison. Such proof against the person to be profited by the death was damning, and would require counter-evidence of the most powerful kind to set it aside.

And where was such counter-evidence to come from? Before this supposition of guilt which was set up against Gabrielle could be

got rid of, some other theory would of necessity have to be put forward. The quantity of opium found in the post-mortem examination—how was it to be accounted for? By some means or other that amount of poison had been conveyed into the system of the deceased lady. Some person or other had been instrumental in introducing that poison—now who was that person? who had any thing to gain by the lady's death? Who had had access to her, and who had had the opportunity of administering the deleterious drug? Was it her servant? So far from gaining by her mistress's death, this woman would be a great loser by it. Had Miss Carrington made a will, she would in all probability have left some considerable sum as a provision for one who had so long been dependent upon her. But there seemed every reason to suppose that there was no will; and in that case Jane Cantanker would not inherit a single farthing.


The only other theory that was deserving of a moment's consideration was that of self-destruction. Was this poison administered by the lady's own hand? There was not one tittle of evidence in support of this view of the case. There had been nothing in the bearing or



conversation of the late Miss Carrington to indicate that she had ever had such a thing in contemplation. There was nothing in her circumstances—pecuniary or otherwise—to lead her to it. She had never been heard to express herself at any time as being weary of life, or having any sorrow pressing on her, the only remedy for which would be death.

No doubt in the course of the inquiries which would now be set on foot, there would be every attempt made to ascertain whether Miss Carrington had had any quantity of the poison by which she had died in her possession, or whether she had recently purchased some at any of the chemists' shops in the neighbourhood. If none could be found, nor any indication gained of such purchase having been made, the supposition of her having died by her own hand would be very much weakened, and the opposite theory, that the poison had been administered by some one else, would be proportionately strengthened.

And then would return the old question—who was that some one else? with the old difficulty of finding any satisfactory answer to it. That question came back from time to time, in a sort of regular rotation, to Gilbert's




mind, and still he could make nothing of it. All through that night, while Gabrielle slept the sleep of pure exhaustion, he kept weary watch, and sought as best he might to reduce this chaos of monotonous thought which racked his brain to some sort of order. It was a terrible night. Most of us have known something sufficiently like it to give us an idea, though a faint one, of what the poor fellow went through.

There is luckily a limit to our powers of endurance ; and when the morning dawned, and showed him that sweet innocent face beside him, he said to himself, "It cannot be but that she will be taken care of, and brought through this and every other trouble to happiness." And with that thought, and a certain uplifting of his heart, with which it is not for us to meddle, he fell into a quiet sleep.

Such seasons of refreshment come to us from time to time even in the midst of our worst troubles, and give us force with which to endure their renewed attacks.

That night Jane Cantanker kept a double watch—a watch on the living and the dead. She sat indeed by the bedside of her dead



mistress; but it was with the door of the room partly open, so that the slightest noise in the house, such as might be made by any attempt to escape on the part of Gabrielle Penmore, must certainly have caught her attention instantly.

And ever and anon she would steal to the door, and, with outstretched neck and suspended breath, would listen, till the very stillness seemed a sound, and the solitude a presence.

## CHAPTER III.


### AN UNIMPRESSIVE CEREMONY.

THE inquest was held in the large upper-room of the Duke of Cumberland public-house, which was not many doors off from the house in Beaumont Street with which we have had so much to do. The coroner was a gentleman of skill and experience. The jury included among its members, as usual, a few men of sense and discretion, and a good many exceedingly opinionated gentlemen, with thick skulls, and a great opinion of their own power of discernment and observation.

Although the inquest itself was held at the adjacent public-house, it was of course necessary that the jury should visit the house in which the death had taken place, in order that they might go through the necessary preliminary of inspecting the body of the person whose death was to be the subject of inquiry. What a houseful it seemed, as they

came crowding into the little passage, and trooping up the narrow staircase, and bulging against the banisters, that were so weak and yielding ! They looked about them, too, as if they expected to see something bearing upon the case in every corner of the house.

In the room—*the* room—which they had come to visit they were received by Jane Cantanker ; and many were the furtive glances directed towards her by such members of the jury as had already heard rumours of the attachment of this woman to her late mistress, and of the suspicions of foul play which she was said to entertain. The woman's looks were terrible. The watch she had kept, the emotion she had undergone, had told upon her already. She was not weeping now ; but her eyes were red and raw-looking, and fierce suspicion glared out of them, so that none of those present cared to encounter their glances. The jury had not much to say, nor any reason for remaining long where they were. This was not a case where there were wounds to inspect, or tracks of blood to follow, or implements of violence to examine. Looking on that face on which the awful majesty of death had settled, it seemed a sort of im-



pertinence almost to doubt about the manner of the unfortunate lady's decease—the expression was so calm and so quiet.

The jurymen lingered about a little while, looked at the prints against the wall, and at the different objects on the chimney-piece, and then they began to descend the stairs in the same order as they had come up, but with something more of alacrity. They had got over that sight which we all flinch from a little. They had got out of the presence of death; and, say what you will, it was a relief. Before leaving, the coroner had ventured to make one inquiry,—“Had any thing been found?” meaning any bottle or other vessel which might have contained the poison.

“Every part of the room had been searched diligently,” was the answer, “but nothing of the kind had been discovered.” The woman stood glaring like a tigress by the dead body of her mistress. “It was not likely that any thing of the kind would be found among her mistress's things,” she said.

The coroner felt that this was not the moment to ask any more questions. He would shortly be able to put them more authoritatively in his professional capacity. So he withdrew

to the Duke of Cumberland, where the jury was already assembled, and whither he was shortly followed by Jane Cantanker, who was indeed one of the principal witnesses to be examined that day.

There are few ceremonials connected with our administration of justice which are less imposing, less picturesque,—if the expression may be allowed,—than that first judicial inquiry which it is the business of the Crown to institute in all cases of a suspicious nature, and which is called an inquest. It can be held any where,—is held oftenest perhaps at a public-house, and seldom indeed in any building where any thing of architectural pretension can give dignity to the scene. There are no court-ushers, no officials in costume, no judges in scarlet robes, or even barristers in wigs and gowns. The coroner and jury sit at a table which was probably the night before used by the members of some convivial meeting, and is indented with the scars which have been left by pewter-pots beaten against the board by enthusiastic gentlemen in token of applause. It is for the most part a squalid scene. Squalid people in the main are examined at such tribunals, and the circum-

stances which are elicited are for the most part squalid also.

Gin, beer, stale tobacco, stunted forms, contracted foreheads, blackened eyes, greasy fustian clothing, servile grovelling, savage effrontery, drunkenness, violence and crime in general—all these are important elements which go to make up in the mass the kind of life which it is most commonly the business of coroners to look into in the course of their inquiries; and very grateful we ought to be to those who undertake to face such unpalatable things in the performance of a public duty.

The present inquiry, however, was of a different sort; and it is rare for a coroner's jury to be brought together to inquire into circumstances with which people in the station of life occupied by our various characters are mixed up. "Quite genteel life, you know," the beadle had said when arguing with a gentleman in the green-grocery line who didn't want to attend—"connected with the government of our West-India hislands, and practising the bar as a profession. It's a case, sir, as you'll hear of again, and be proud to say in after years that you was mixed up with it from the first."

The inquest which was organised for the



purpose of making due inquiry into the circumstances attending the death of Diana Carington was not a more impressive ceremony than others of its class. The coroner sat at the end of the table, and was "faced" by the foremost jurymen. The others were seated round the table in no particular order. There was that curious hardness about the manner of the coroner which is commonly observable in all persons who are much mixed up professionally with death and with scenes of horror and suffering. Brisk, energetic, little ready to be drawn aside into a consideration of collateral issues, destitute, apparently, of feeling, this man did his work well, and in every practical point tenderly and considerately. A smart man this, very particular as to his attire, and not ill provided with chains and breloques: there was not a better watch in the parish than that which ticked against his healthy and spare abdomen.

"Well, gentlemen," began the coroner, after the inevitable *sotto voce* consultations with the beadle and one or two other officials had been gone through, and after the invariable messenger had been despatched in search of somebody or something, and had then been called

back for supplementary promptings, and then despatched again—"Well, gentlemen, we are met together to inquire into the circumstances attending the death of this lady, Diana Carrington, whose remains you have just seen, and who seems to have come by her death in rather a suspicious manner; the deceased having retired to rest in her usual state of health, and having been found next morning dead in her bed. It will be your business, gentlemen, to ascertain how the deceased lady came by her death, and to examine such witnesses as are most likely to be able to throw some light upon the subject. Are the witnesses all here, Robbins?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Who stands first on the list?"

"Jane Cantanker, your worship."

"Call Jane Cantanker," said the coroner.

Jane Cantanker was there already, with dry red glaring eyes, like a she-wolf deprived of her whelps. She was perfectly self-possessed and unembarrassed. Embarrassment belongs to those who are occupied with themselves. Cantanker was engrossed with other matters. Her mistress lay dead: how had she died?

The examination of this witness was about to commence when it became understood that

she had some preliminary observations to make.

"I wish to say something of importance before I am examined," said Cantanker.

"What have you to say?" asked the coroner.

"There is a person connected with this case," she said abruptly, "whom I suspect of foul play; and I wish to know whether any steps can be taken to insure her being kept in custody while the inquiry goes on. I speak of Mrs. Penmore, the lady of the house in which my mistress died."

"The lady will be examined at the proper time," said the coroner, referring to a paper in his hand. In the mean time the jury cannot listen to any denunciations on your part. You must give your evidence as the other witnesses will, and it will be for the jury to decide to whom, if to any one, suspicion should attach."

The evidence then followed. This is not the proper place in which to give it. It is enough to say that what the witness had stated previously to Dr. Giles in his consulting-room was again gone through; the woman dwelling, however, with additional insistence upon the unnatural eagerness, as she called it,

which Mrs. Penmore had manifested in her request to be allowed to supply Cantanker's place in taking the supper-tray upstairs with her own hands. She dwelt on this and made much of it, as she did of the fact that in going upstairs with these refreshments Mrs. Penmore had stepped aside into the room on the first floor, remaining there some little time. It was evidently the wish of the witness to imply that in that interval Mrs. Penmore had tampered with the meat and drink which she was carrying upstairs, though of course this was not said in so many words, but only unmistakably hinted at. There was much sensation among the jurymen during the whole of this narrative, and they whispered together frequently during its delivery.

It was perhaps unfortunate for Gabrielle that her evidence came next, as that of the last witness had certainly not impressed the jury favourably towards her. She was dreadfully nervous too, and agitated. The circumstances in the midst of which she found herself were so new to her. That large tavern-room, with its smell of beer and stale tobacco; the rough, strange-looking people about the place; the policemen, a class with whom she had never

thought she could have any concern, unless it was to claim protection from them,—all these things, together with the inquiring looks of the members of the jury, which were fixed on her with a combination of curiosity and suspicion, served to fill her with such terror and confusion as rendered her evidence at first hardly intelligible. The coroner, though, as has been said, rather a hard man, was disposed to help her and give her time; but even he looked gravely on her, and even his kindness had a cold tone about it, she thought. It seemed to her that this gentleman considered himself as examining a culprit rather than a witness. It may be that he felt this himself.

Poor thing! It seems likely that Gabrielle must have been conscious during her examination how much her own evidence was telling to her disadvantage. All the facts seemed so strongly to point against her; they all looked so different now to what they had done at the time. The tale she had to tell was all so fatally against herself. Her conduct seemed incapable of explanation, even in her own eyes—what would it appear in those of others?

“Can you remember any circumstances which took place on the evening of the day on

which the deceased breathed her last?" This was one of the coroner's first questions. Of course he had not neglected to caution her very strongly that any thing she said might be used to her disadvantage.

Gabrielle's answers throughout the inquiry were singularly unlike the evasive replies to which coroners are accustomed. Yet she was very frightened and spoke in a low tone of voice.

"Miss Carrington dined with us as usual."

"Can you remember any thing peculiar that took place?"

"Yes, I can remember every thing. I am sorry to say that the conversation turned in an unfortunate direction, and some angry words were spoken on both sides."

"On both sides. By your husband and yourself on the one side, and by the deceased lady on the other?"

"There were no angry words spoken by my husband. Those that *were* spoken came from my lips and from—from—" she hesitated to speak in apparent disparagement of the dead. "My husband tried to quiet me, but I was very angry."

"May I ask what had excited these unpleasant feelings?"

"I thought—perhaps I was mistaken—that she spoke with a wish to raise herself in my husband's esteem at my expense, implying that he would have done well to have chosen her for his wife rather than me."

"And this led to high words, no doubt? Can you remember what you said?"

"I spoke hastily in the heat of the moment. I did not mean what I said."

"We have been told that you spoke of Miss Carrington as 'not fit to live.' Is that true?"

"I am afraid it is."

"I gather from the evidence of the previous witness that you were one of the last persons who saw the deceased lady on the evening which preceded her death. Did you observe any thing unusual in her manner or appearance? Did she seem to be suffering at all in health?"

"She seemed to be very sleepy and heavy, and complained of being tired."

"Nothing more remarkable than that?"

"No; I remember nothing."

"I must now ask you," resumed the coroner after a pause, "whether your going upstairs on this occasion with the deceased lady's

supper was not an unusual proceeding on your part? Had you ever in fact done so before?"

This question was answered in the negative; a circumstance which seemed to impress the jury not a little.

"And how came it that on this occasion you departed from your usual practice?"

"It was in consequence of what took place at dinner-time. I wanted to take the opportunity of having some explanation, and of expressing my regret for what had occurred."

"And this was your only motive for acting as you did?"

"Indeed it was. What other could I have?"

What other indeed, poor soul? That was just the question. The jurymen looked at one another. There was a sort of artlessness about these words which for the moment quite disarmed suspicion. Even the coroner paused for a time in his examination.

He resumed it after a while, endeavouring to extract all the particulars of that last interview; but there was nothing more to be gathered from the evidence than what the reader knows already.

"And this interview which took place on



the occasion of your taking up the refreshments to Miss Carrington was the last? You never saw her again?"

"I never saw her again alive. I heard the tidings of what had happened from the servant next morning, and hastened upstairs; but it was all over then."

It was not difficult to see that this evidence of Mrs. Penmore's was by no means satisfactory to the jury. Questions were put by some of the jurymen with the view of eliciting more information in connection with various parts of the inquiry; but as Gabrielle had told all she had to tell, the questions were put in vain. In vain also did the coroner, versed in the examining of witnesses, seek in his turn to extract some additional facts. There were no additional facts to extract, and Gabrielle was at length released from this terrible ordeal.

Gilbert was close at hand waiting for her. He had not been admitted to the room during the examination of witnesses, because it had been thought possible that it might have been necessary for him to be included among them. His evidence, however, could only have been a corroboration of that last taken, so it was

dispensed with, and that of the medical man was taken next.

It was very important, and—in this respect an exception to the general rule—very decisive. There were no hesitating opinions broached here as to what might or might not have been the cause of death. The traces of the poison were not difficult to find, nor was its nature doubtful. The cause of death was the administration of opium, and that in a considerable quantity. There was no doubt of it. The examination of the body after death had revealed no indications of mortal disease. There was slight congestion of the liver, and certain small deviations from a perfectly healthy condition of some of the other organs, but no such symptoms of organic disease as could in any way account for death. The question now left for the jury to decide was not the cause of death—that there was no doubt of; laudanum, and that in a sufficient quantity to destroy life, had been found in the stomach of the deceased lady. The question that now remained was—by whom was it administered? how did it get there?

Now, in order to arrive at a solution of this question, it became necessary to ascertain

—first, whether the deceased lady had had any opium in her own possession, or had recently purchased any? and next whether any quantity, large or small, of this drug had lately been in the hands of any of those persons who had had access to her in her last hours? The first of these two hypotheses was that which it seemed desirable to examine first. Already the room of the deceased had been searched, and her boxes and drawers ransacked for evidences of her having had laudanum in her own possession. The search had, however, hitherto been in vain. It was necessary by all means to prove—in so far as a negative could be proved—that the poison had not been administered by the deceased's own hand before stirring the question of its having been given by some one else. To accuse any other person—or even to suspect any other person—of having so administered it was to accuse or suspect that person of nothing less than wilful murder; and such an accusation it was felt on all sides (except indeed by one person) must not be brought hastily, or till all other theories connected with the case were exhausted and finally disposed of.

Had Jane Cantanker been a man, and

formed one of that jury, she would have been for losing no time in considering that first hypothesis, whether the deceased lady might have died by her own hand, but would have proceeded at once to charge Gabrielle Penmore with the crime of wilful murder, and to set the police to work to hunt for such additional evidence against her as would complete that which was already in existence, and leave her without a loophole to creep out of. But this woman's accusations were, as we have seen, not listened to, and Mrs. Penmore was to be left at liberty till the police had had time to make inquiry as to whether any of the different occupants of the house in Beaumont Street had made any recent purchase of laudanum.

As to the private opinions of those who had listened to the evidence as to what the coroner and each member of the jury secretly believed, that is another question altogether. That every thing seemed to point to Gabrielle Penmore as the person most likely to have administered the poison they probably would all and each have admitted, but they gave her the benefit of the doubt, so long as doubt was still possible, feeling that there wanted but

one additional link in the chain of evidence to connect Gabrielle with the crime. That additional link was to be supplied, alas, only too soon.

Meanwhile the inquest was adjourned, in order to give the police time to make the necessary investigations ; and the medical evidence being quite complete, the order for the burial of the deceased was duly given.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BALAAM AND BALAK.

THE vindictive spirit of Jane Cantanker was quite insatiable in its desire for the consummation of Gabrielle Penmore's ruin. One would have said that already this poor lady was deeply enough involved in toils, partly of her own weaving and partly of the Cantanker construction; but it appears that she was not sufficiently compromised yet to satisfy her deadly enemy.

Mrs. Cantanker was gifted, among other qualities, with an amount of superstition which she took so much pains to conceal that no one who knew her would ever have thought of giving her credit for its possession. Nothing would ever have induced her to sit down under any circumstances to any meal at which twelve other persons were to assist. She would never begin any undertaking, of what sort soever, on a Friday. If her nails had suddenly

grown an inch long in the course of Thursday night, they would have had to remain as they were, at whatever inconvenience, till Saturday morning, as they must not under any circumstances be cut on a Friday; and that must have been indeed a desirable object of attainment which she would have passed under a ladder to reach. But strongest with her among all these convictions was a firm belief in the efficacy of charms, and the power which certain individuals possessed of bewitching others and working them mischief by means of spells, incantations, and other similar agencies of destruction. Such a creed as this tends very materially to increase the difficulties of human life, it being no use to attempt even to prosper if you feel convinced that some irresistible influence is at work to blast all your best efforts and render them utterly unavailing. Leave undone what you might, and you must still prosper, if favourable influences hovered over you. Work as you liked, take all the means of succeeding within your reach and make the most of them, and still you must fail, if the evil charm was at work against you.

Now such being the creed of Mrs. Cantanker, it is surely not to be wondered at that in

a concern to which she attached so much importance as this of bringing poor Gabrielle Penmore to destruction, she should desire to enlist upon her side those terrible influences in which she held such firm belief. She *did* desire to avail herself of these, but there was a difficulty.

In a small court or alley which led out of a by-street in the neighbourhood of the Edgeware Road there had lived formerly a certain old woman with whom Cantanker had had dealings, and who could—horrible to relate—charm you or counter-charm you out of house and home in no time. For the rest, she was a most fascinating specimen of humanity, with a hoarse voice, a brown wig, and fluffy gray hairs curling beautifully about her mouth and chin. She was the terror of all the neighbouring children, and had such a reputation for supernatural gifts that when she died at the ripe age of ninety-four it was looked upon as quite a piece of self-denial on her part; as it was certain that, with her capacity, she might have gone on for another hundred years or so at least, had she thought proper.

Now by the death of this good lady it happened that Jane Cantanker was cut off from all



those resources of a spiritual nature to which she had been wont to have recourse, and on which she had been accustomed to depend. She could neither procure spells with which to confound her enemies, nor could she shelter herself under counter-charms from the devices which those enemies might practise against herself. It was terrible to be left thus unaided by supernatural influences, and unprotected from them as well. What was to be done?

Of course the natural way out of the difficulty, and that which common sense—supposing it to have any thing to do with such an affair—would suggest was, to find a successor to the wise woman of the Edgeware Road, some one on whom her mantle might be supposed to have fallen. For such a person Mrs. Cantanker had long been on the look-out; and it seemed at last that her search was to be rewarded with success.

Mrs. Cantanker had a friend who kept a “general shop” not far from Beaumont Street, and with whom it was her habit to hold long conversations over the counter whenever her occasions took her into the street in which the “general shop” was situated. This friend was also a believer in necromancy, and attached as

much importance to the good or evil offices of those who dealt in it as Jane Cantanker herself. There are more of these believers than people generally imagine; and even now in this enlightened nineteenth century we have only to study that brief epitome of the times—the newspaper—to see how widely extended among our lower classes is the belief in witchcraft and its terrible influences.

Now it so happened that this worthy general dealer, who had felt the loss of the wise woman of the Edgeware Road almost as much as any member of her *clientèle*, had been informed by some of her friends of the extraordinary powers of a supernatural kind possessed by our old friend Cornelius Vampi; to which powers rumour had as usual done something more than justice, gifting him not only with marvellous capabilities of vaticination and fortune-telling, but also with such gifts in the way of casting spells and bestowing charms as rendered him at once the most desirable of allies and the most dangerous of enemies,—a man, in fact, who could wither up one of your legs, or cover you with sores from head to foot, by simply scribbling a few words on a piece of parchment or burning a handful of herbs in a chafing-dish.

"In short, dear," said this good lady in the "general" line, at the conclusion of a long discourse on the subject of Mr. Vampi's qualifications, "I should say—for I only know of him by hearsay and have never consulted him myself—that he's the kind of man whom, if you want any thing to turn up trumps, you should get upon your side; while if there's any thing equally that you'd like to see going to the dogs, you couldn't possibly do better than set him agin it. And this I'm sure of, that Walters' little girl, which, as you know, is withered up like any mummy, was bewitched by this very Mr. Vampi from the first, as sure, aye—as sure as its parents was both first cousins and eaten hup with scrofiler on both sides."

It was not likely that Jane Cantanker would be able to resist the opportunity of securing the services of such a person as this; and so it happened that on the very evening of the day on which the inquest had been held at the Duke of Cumberland she set out with the distinct intention of finding out Mr. Cornelius Vampi, and securing his services, as Balak sought to get those of Balaam, for the confusion of her enemy.

There was not much difficulty in finding,

by the description which she had obtained from her friend, the abode of Mr. Vampi. If there had been nothing but the owl in spectacles which stood in the window to know it by, that would still have been enough; so Cantanker turned into the shop without much hesitation—indeed she was not one of the hesitating sort—and looked about her for some one answering to the description she had received of the astrologer.

He was evidently not there. So Cantanker went up to the counter to see if there was any one there to whom she could apply for information as to when and where he could be found. The shop was, as usual, pretty full—and an old man and a lad behind the counter were both engaged already two or three deep. An old woman—no other indeed than our friend Mrs. Smaggsdale—came forward to meet her.

“Want Mr. Vampi, do you?” she inquired.  
“What is it? Corns?”

“No, certainly not.”

“Bunions, then, or warts?”

“No, no, nothing of the sort at all. I want to see him—Mr. Vampi himself.”

“O, you want to see him himself, do you? Ah, then it's 'oroscopes or fortune-telling or

something of that sort. Here, Smagg," continued the sceptic, "it's somebody wanting the governor, and nobody else will do."

"Very well," replied the other, "I'll step up and tell him. No particular message, is there?" he added, addressing Cantanker.

"No; just that I want to see him, if it's only for a minute or two."

"There's pretty nigh every thing about the business," said Mrs. Smaggsdale, addressing the mysterious customer with something of contempt, "as I can attend to myself,—herbs and seeds, and corn-plasters, and purifying pills, and cures for the toothache, and marking-ink, and what not. But when it comes to 'oroscopes I ain't no use at all; and what's more, I don't care if I never am."

Meanwhile Mr. Smaggsdale ascended the stairs which led to the observatory, and in due time found himself in the presence of the great astrologer himself. "Please, sir, you're wanted below, if you can make it convenient," gasped the messenger, for he was considerably out of breath with the ascent. "Lady wants you," he continued, with another gasp.

"'Lady?'" echoed the sage, quickly. "What lady? not—"

"Not *the* lady. No, sir, she haven't been."

"Strange!" muttered the philosopher to himself; "I never knew her fail to come when she said she would."

"Ah, she *was* a punctual one," remarked Smaggs corroboratively, "was the strange lady!"

"And this other lady," inquired Cornelius, "won't she tell you her business?"

"No," replied the little man. "She ain't exactly a lady, you know. But be that as it may, it's you she wants to see, and nobody else."

"Well, then, you must ask her if she'll take the trouble to come up. I can't leave what I'm about just now, as you see."

The philosopher did indeed seem to be most especially busy. He was in the act of making some excessively intricate preparation over the fire. It was something which appeared to require incessant stirring and equally incessant additions of some boiling liquid, which was turned on by means of a tap from an immense copper cauldron stewing over the fire. The philosopher wore a costume which was reserved for his chemical experiments; a sort of enormous pinafore with sleeves. The ne-

cessity for the adoption of some such dress while practical chemistry was being carried on was shown by the number of splashes with which the pinafore was decorated. The garment reached the sage's heels, and showed his vast stature to the greatest advantage. He wore a white cap moreover, and presented altogether a somewhat startling appearance.

"She's to come up, is she?" inquired Smaggsdale hesitatingly.

"Yes, certainly,—if she'll take the trouble," replied the astrologer, who was always courteous.

"Won't you—won't you take your gown off?"

"No, I couldn't do that, Smagg. The mixture isn't half done yet, and I must finish the composition to-night, because it was begun under Saturn, and must, if possible, be finished under the same conditions."

Old Smagg was in one of his sceptical moods; so he made no answer, and withdrew.

"She never failed before," muttered Cornelius to himself, reverting again to the subject which had just before occupied him; "and she mentioned the day so particularly; and then there was her future which I couldn't get

a glimpse of—another reason why she should be specially anxious to come. Not,” continued the chemist, turning-on a new supply of liquor from the cauldron, and stirring more vehemently than ever,—“not that I’ve any more definite intelligence for her if she does come. I’ve had no better luck; and what was a blank before is a blank still, and seems likely to remain so, as far as I can see.”

The philosopher was disturbed in his reflections by a smart tap at the door—a tap indeed such as could never have emanated from the vacillating knuckles of the doubtful Smaggsdale. In fact it was that gentleman’s better half, who, in consideration of her husband’s breathless condition, had consented to show Mrs. Cantanker the way to the sanctum.

“Party for a horror-scope,” said the worthy lady, flinging open the door abruptly.

“Horoscope, woman,” retorted the philosopher.

“Ah, well, it don’t much matter.”

“Yes, but I tell you that it does matter. These things are of too great importance to be thus flippantly dealt with. Where’s your husband?”



"He's trying to catch his breath. He lost it coming up here last time."

"Well, tell him to come up himself next time. You may go."

"O yes, I'll go fast enough; I don't want *my* fortune told;" and she flounced out of the room, leaving Mrs. Cantanker staring with astonishment at all that she saw and heard.

"That woman is a source of great annoyance to me," said the philosopher in an explanatory manner. "If it was not for her husband, I would get rid of her."

The person thus addressed remained speechless. Indeed she was too much astonished to say any thing. The novelty of the scene and the extraordinary aspect presented by our experimentalist were too much even for Cantanker.

In truth it must be owned that the appearance of the great man *was* a little out of the ordinary way. His costume alone, coupled with his great size, would have been enough to startle any body; but in addition to this, it must be taken into consideration by the reader who would form an idea of Mr. Vampi's appearance that his countenance had at this time contracted something of the flaming quality of the

furnace over which he had been bending, and was suffused with a hue of the deepest crimson, thrown out in tremendous relief by his white robes and cap. It was a wondrous apparition, then, that stood before Mrs. Cantanker, as the philosopher turned round, pipkin in hand, to address her.

"You wished to consult me, I think?" said Cornelius, pulling off his cap to make a bow. "I am here, at your service."

Cantanker was a little puzzled how to begin. Cornelius Vampi was a very different person from the sibyl of the Edgeware Road. The very benevolence of his aspect made Cantanker's proposal all the more difficult. How could she ask that innocent, philanthropical-looking creature to curse her enemy?

She looked about the room in her perplexity as to how to begin. There was a set of colossal drawings on pasteboard of the signs of the zodiac, hanging on the walls. They looked very large and truculent; and as her eye lit upon Cancer, and anon upon Scorpio, she seemed to get encouragement. The man who could take delight in such things was not altogether without malignant capacity, she felt sure.

After once turning round to address her, Cornelius had returned immediately to the composition on which he was engaged. Can-tanker could speak without having his eye upon her,—that was something.

“I took the liberty of calling,” she began, “in consequence of having heard from a friend that you were in the habit of having dealings with things that are altogether out of the common way, and in the supernatural line,—the ‘eavenly bodies, and fortune-telling, and such like.”

“You have heard rightly, ma’am,” replied the philosopher. “To stand upon the very verge and limits of the visible and tangible world, and gaze forth into that world which is invisible and intangible, is the highest and most glorious achievement which belongs to man; and I frankly own that studies of the kind which you indicate have formed a great part of the business of my life.”

There was not much encouragement in this. It was not to inquire into the secrets which are hidden under the veil of futurity that Can-tanker had come to visit the astrologer. She had come to enlist in her service an agency in whose efficacy she firmly believed, and which

it seemed to her the extreme of folly to neglect.

"I suppose," she said, after a little reflection, "that you don't go through all this study of the stars and the 'eavenly bodies and what not, without its giving you some power like over your fellow-creatures?"

"Power?" echoed Vampi; "of what sort?"

"Why, power to benefit them, or—or—may be—to injure them."

The astrologer lifted his eyes from the elixir in whose composition he was engaged, and fixed them upon his visitor. The result of his scrutiny seemed hardly satisfactory, and his face wore a dissatisfied look as he returned to his pipkin. "Now what is this woman driving at?" he said to himself.

"Power both for good and evil I have undoubtedly," he said aloud; and Cantanker brightened up at the words. "For good, in that I can direct those whose future I make the subject of study what they should do in certain emergencies, how they may make the most of the good chances which are to come in their way, and steer clear of dangers which menace them. In that way I have certainly power for good—"

"And for evil?" asked the woman eagerly.

"Power for evil," replied the philosopher, eyeing her curiously, "I might have in this way. I might see my client in peril, might feel certain that some sword of Damocles was hanging over him, might see him drawing nearer at every step which he took to the precipice over which, unwarned, he would certainly fall, and might abstain from uttering the words which would turn him aside from the path of danger. All this I might do, certainly, and so exercise a power for evil, which though negative, should be still of deadly efficacy."

"But it is more than this that I want," the woman went on, wrought up now to a revelation of the real object of her mission. "There is a person in existence who has been guilty of a crime which I desire to see avenged, who has struck at me, not indeed intentionally, but in striking at one whom I loved and had loved for years; one whom it was my pride and happiness to serve, and who now lies dead and cold, murdered by the hand of this person of whom I speak, and against whom I would have you direct all the power of evil which you may possess, or can by any means gain, through some of these secret arts that you practise."

"But is this person guilty?"

"Yes, a hundred times—yes."

"Then let justice do its work."

"Yes, and so it shall. But justice may fail. I want to be secure of my revenge. These magistrates and coroners, these judges and juries, may fail. I have no belief in them. They are fools, and a winning face and a seeming innocent manner may hoodwink them and turn them from the truth. I want something more, I tell you. Can you give it me?"

"Give you what?"

"A charm, a spell—something that shall be as a curse upon this one of whom I speak; a curse under which she shall lie without power to rise; a spell that shall bind her hand and foot; a spell against her life, against the life of—you'll want her name—it's a French one, Gabrielle; don't forget it—Gabrielle Penmore. Draw up a curse—a witchcraft spell against that name."

"Stop, woman, stop!" cried Cornelius; "I know nothing of such arts as these, nor wish to know."

"What! Have you given up your mind to studying the stars, and learning all about their movements and their twistings and

turnings this way and that, and one circumventing another, and all the rest of it, and all to so little purpose that you can't bring what you know to bear upon something useful, such as helping those you want to help, and crushing those you want to destroy? Are there no evil stars whose aid you can depend upon? Have you no incantations which compel their services—no spells which they cannot resist?"

Cornelius was almost terrified at the violence of his new client. In all his experience no such person as this had ever come in his way.

"All these things that you speak of may be possible," he said at last, for he was unwilling to limit the capabilities of his art; "all this power may be mine—"

"May be!" repeated the woman scornfully.

"Yes, 'may be,'" repeated Cornelius stoutly. "It is not for me to say how great are the resources of the art mystic, or what wondrous gifts it can confer upon its students. Twenty or thirty years is but a short time to have devoted to the arcana, and that is all the study of which I can boast. It may be that additional years of research and

thought might lead me on to additional discoveries, and to some among them that would impart such powers as those you speak of. But even were it so—were such capacity for evil within my grasp, so that I should see the victim of my skill withering under my curse, consuming to nothing beneath my spell—know that the gift should lie unclaimed—for me—from day to day and from year to year. My ambition is to do good to man, not evil; to work out the relief of suffering humanity, not to lay fresh loads of sorrow on it. You are mistaken, ma'am, and have mistaken me. You have come to consult a Samuel, when you should have sought out a Witch of Endor."

The expression which developed itself on the countenance of Jane Cantanker as she listened to this speech of the benevolent astrologer was one of the most profound and unmitigated wonder, gradually merging into contempt and pity. For some time she remained silent, gazing at our stout philanthropist in speechless scorn. At last she rose to go.

"You are right," she said; "I have been mistaken. I came here thinking to find a man gifted with supernatural powers, and ready to



turn them to some account. For I have money here. I came to buy a spell, not to beg one."

"You can neither buy nor beg aught of me," said Cornelius, rising in turn, and speaking with infinite dignity, "that shall do an injury to any member of the human race. You have mistaken me, as I said before; and I will now ask you to relieve this poor workshop, in which you have not found the wares you looked for, of your presence, and leave me as you found me—harmlessly at work."

And the astrologer took the lamp from the table and moved towards the door, ready to light his visitor down the stairs. There was a courtesy in his action which there was no resisting. His appearance was calm and unruffled, but his countenance was more grave than was its wont; and those who knew the philosopher's face best would have been able to see that he had been much hurt by what had just taken place.

Jane Cantanker passed down the stairs and out of the house without another word being exchanged between her and the astrologer, who escorted her to the last. He heaved a deep sigh as he closed the door after her, and

paused a moment before he again ascended the stairs.

“What was that name,” he asked himself, “against which she bore such hatred? ‘Gabrielle’ I remember; she spoke it twice. But I forget the other name. ‘Gabrielle,’ ‘Gabrielle’—no, I have forgotten.”

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHAIN COMPLETE.

THREE days elapsed after the adjournment of the inquest before the inquiry was again resumed, and during this interval the police were hard at work trying to collect any additional evidence that might bear upon the case. Their chief object of course was to find out where that poison by which it had been conclusively proved that Miss Carrington had died had been procured. Her rooms were searched most diligently and thoroughly for any bottle, or even a detached label, which might indicate that she had bought the drug herself, and show where she had procured it. But no such thing could be found. It was then determined to take the different chemists' shops, beginning in the immediate neighbourhood, and gradually extending the operations to a wider radius, and to make inquiry at each

with a view of ascertaining whether any person answering to the description of the deceased lady had been there with the object of purchasing laudanum. The Trades' Directory was consulted, and a list of the chemists and druggists extracted from it, a mark being set against the name of each member of the pharmaceutical fraternity, as it appeared in the volume, thus: Roberts, James, ivory turner.—\*Groves, William, chemist.—Peterkin, Andrew, licensed victualler. — Roper, Thomas, basket - maker. — Vokins, Richard, herbalist and seedsman.—Snooks, Frederick, fancy stationer.—\*Drew, Jonas, chemist; and so on. The names of the chemists were then extracted with great care and written down upon a separate paper.

The inquiries made by the police were, as far as the discovery of any purchase made by the deceased lady was concerned, entirely in vain. They could find no trace of any purchase of laudanum having been made by any such person. It was not long, however, before their researches were turned into another channel.

Jane Cantanker could find no rest for her soul while haunted by the thought that the

murderer of her dear mistress—which, it must be remembered, she fully believed Mrs. Penmore to be—was going about at large and unpunished. So she also set herself to work, in imitation of the police authorities, to visit the different chemists' shops, but with a different discovery in view. She was on another track—the track of Gabrielle Penmore. Had *she* had laudanum in her possession about this time? Was it not more important to find that out than any thing else? Was it not possible for her—Jane Cantanker—to make that great discovery?

It was so. She worked with a will, and very soon her efforts were crowned with success. At a chemist's shop not very far from the house in Beaumont Street Cantanker discovered that Mrs. Penmore had been in the habit of dealing for medicine; and here she ascertained that on a certain day some three weeks since, Gabrielle had made the damning purchase of a two-ounce bottle of laudanum.

Jane Cantanker's breath came thick and fast as she made this tremendous discovery, and her knees trembled so under her that she was hardly able to stand at the counter.

"Have you got that down in your books?"

she asked, as soon as she could trust herself to speak.

"O certainly," replied the druggist, a smug gentleman in spectacles, who seemed much astonished.

"And there is no danger of its being lost?"

"How can there be?" asked the other, with a touch of contempt in his tone, and giving his ledger an affectionate slap. "The book's big enough."

Cantanker waited a little, trying to remember whether she had any other question to ask.

"What! it's down in the big book?" she asked, with a gasp of satisfaction.

"Yes," said the chemist.

"What sort of a bottle would it be in?" she said,— "a large bottle?"

"Two-ounce phial similar to this," replied the chemist, producing one. "Made of blue glass; ribbed so as to affect the touch; orange label outside, 'Poison,' and another, 'For external use,' that being what it was wanted for."

"There's something up," remarked the chemist to his chief assistant, as Cantanker,

after thanking him for his courtesy, and once more entreating him to be careful of the entry which told so important a tale, left the shop with hurried steps, and with considerable agitation in her demeanour.

Cantanker made the best of her way to the police-station, and there imparted her discovery to the inspector on duty. She was beginning to be known here, and to be highly respected as well, in consequence of the decided and uncompromising manner in which she had conducted herself at the inquest. The inspector paid her a compliment or two on her energy and devotedness, and after taking down what she had said, despatched one of his most trusted emissaries, straight to the chemist's, to take his deposition in form.

The policeman had a thick note-book, bound in calf and interleaved with blotting-paper, in his hand when he entered the shop; and as he stood apart in close commune with the chemist, many a wandering glance, both on the part of the assistants behind, and the customers before, the counter, was directed towards the two.

"And so you let the lady 'ave it merely for the hasking?" remarked the constable.

"Yes, sir; such being our custom when we know the party."

"When you know the party," echoed the policeman, "and not otherwise?"

"On no account otherwise," replied the chemist.

"And this party you did know?"

"O dear, yes, sir. The lady's dealt here scores and scores of times."

"But not for hopium?" urged the myrmidon of justice.

"No, sir; this was the first occasion of her making such a purchase."

The policeman waited a little while, and looked over the notes which he had made, appearing very well satisfied with them. Presently he spoke again, as if making a final inquiry.

"And did the lady state what she wanted it for?"

"External use, sir, as I said. The lady had passed many years of her life in a very hot climate, and it seemed that the change to our damp atmosphere, and the cold, affected her with pains about the arms and shoulders, which she found were relieved by rubbing with laudanum more than by any other means."



"Ha," said the policeman, "that was what she said, was it?"

"That was it, sir. So I made her up the two ounces and let her have it, merely cautioning her to keep it shut up, and out of the way of any person who might be injured by it. I bade her be particularly careful that way," remarked the chemist, afraid of getting into a scrape.

The policeman seemed now to have gained all the information that was necessary, and shut up his book.

"We shall most likely want you to repeat what you have just said, in evidence, in the course of a day or two," he remarked, "so you'd better hold yourself in readiness to attend."

"I'm not likely to get into any trouble about it, am I?" asked the chemist.

The policeman took time to consider this question, keeping the druggist in a state of agonising uncertainty the while.

"Not that I can see at present," he said at last; "but I can't say for certain."

The discovery of this purchase of laudanum on the part of Mrs. Penmore—a discovery due rather to Jane Cantanker's vigilance than that

of the police authorities—altered the whole posture of affairs, and added so much to the strength of the evidence against Gabrielle as to justify the adoption of such measures as might tend to decide at once the question of her guilt or innocence.

With this view, and without loss of time, a warrant was obtained; and under its authority a search was instituted, having for its object the discovery of that bottle in which the laudanum sold by the chemist had been contained, and of which so minute a description had been given.

And now, indeed, the case did begin to wear a sinister aspect, and great and serious alarm for Gabrielle's safety began to weigh upon her husband's heart. She was suspected of a crime. One step more and she might be accused. The ministers of justice were on her track. What a thought it was that these men should have the right to come into the house, into her room even, to invade the sacred precincts of her bed-chamber, and that he, her husband, must stand by and allow it—must remain inactive while the household goods were subjected to desecration! Yet it was so. Resistance was useless, and worse than use-

less. It might aggravate the evil; it could not palliate it.

As for Gabrielle herself, she seemed for the time entirely crushed and paralyzed by the horror of her situation. All force, all presence of mind had for the time deserted her. She seemed to herself, and looked to others, like one who lived and moved in a dream—a dream, and a most horrible one, and *from which she did not wake*.

It was piteous to see how she clung to her husband too, in the fulness of her misery, with a sort of mechanical feeling that he could save and help her. She followed him about. She dared not let him out of her sight. She held to his arm as if she dreaded lest they should take him from her. She looked up into his face for some sign of encouragement, some indication that he at least knew that there would soon be an awakening from this horrible dream. As for Gilbert, he had to find strength for two. With misgiving and anxiety gnawing at his own heart, he was obliged to disguise these feelings altogether, and to assume a conviction, which he was far from feeling, that Gabrielle's fears were wholly without foundation. It is so difficult to

convince others when we are not convinced ourselves.

Sometimes it did seem as if Gabrielle's head had given way under the heavy pressure, and could now receive no distinct impression of any thing. There were times when she no longer appeared to realise her danger, and yet other times—and these oftenest in the gray early morning—when it seemed to be borne in upon her with an almost exaggerated force and an anguish that was unbearable. It was a horrible thing to wake to this—so horrible that sometimes the wildest schemes would come into her head in connection with her situation.

She would at these times entreat her husband to fly with her before it was too late: “while there is time, while yet there is time,” she would cry—“let us go. Far away, Gilbert dear, far from this dreadful place. We two could be so happy among the woods and rocks, away from wicked cruel men and women, happy and safe. Come, Gilbert, come; if we steal away now in the early morning, nobody will see us. I am afraid,” she would say at such times, “I am afraid of that woman. Take me away—take me where I can

never see her, Gilbert—take me, if you love me !”

And then when her miserable husband, hardly more reasonable than herself, besought her to remember how to do such a thing would be to throw away their last chance, and how it would proclaim her to be guilty before all the world, then would she fall into a worse state still, and would cry out that he too was deserting her, that he believed her guilty, and that his love for her was gone.

Worst horror, this, of all, but not—Heaven’s mercy be thanked—of long continuance. Ere long she would acknowledge the truth and justice of all that he said, and clinging round him once again, would entreat him that he would at least accord her this one favour, that if—if it came to the worst, he would in some way convey to her the means of death, that so she might die by his beloved hand. Such were some of the phases of affliction through which this suffering woman passed at this time.

On that critical day when, in consequence of the discovery made at the chemist’s, certain authorities came to search her room, she stood outside the door trembling in anticipation of

some new horror. Her husband was inside with the men, but presently he came out to speak to her and comfort her.

"What are they doing, Gilbert?" she asked, looking into his eyes for hope.

Gilbert told her of their search, and what it was they looked for.

"And have they found it?" she asked.

"Found—found what?"

"The bottle, Gilbert. Don't you remember, dear?"

"Remember," he repeated mechanically—"no."

"Not remember—I got it to rub my poor shoulder—THE LAUDANUM!"

Penmore uttered a cry of agony as if in physical pain.

"Was there any left?" he gasped.

"Yes, about half."

"And what did you do with it?"

"I hid it. The chemist told me to keep it out of the way of the servants, so I hid it."

"O, why did you do that?" cried Gilbert, who had remained for a moment stunned. "It will look worse than all the rest."

"I was so afraid lest some one should get

hold of it," said Gabrielle, "and so there might be mischief done."

Again there was a silence. They were there on the landing outside the bedroom door. They could hear the men inside talking; they could hear them moving articles of furniture, opening and shutting drawers, and turning over every thing that came in their way.

"Where did you hide it, Gabrielle?" said her husband, taking her hand, which was as cold as ice.

"In the box underneath the bed."

"Is it locked?"

"Yes, and I have got the key. I thought to keep it safe, Gilbert. You are not angry with me?"

"Angry? my poor darling! But you must give me the key."

"O Gilbert!"

"Yes, yes," he said eagerly. "It is our only chance."

There was a pause in the movement that had been going on within the room, and then a dragging sound, as of some object drawn heavily across the floor. The husband and wife looked each other in the face.

"The key, the key!" said Gilbert again. Gabrielle took her bunch from her pocket, and with trembling hands divided the key from the rest.

"This is it," she whispered.

At that moment the door of the bedroom was opened from within, and one of the policemen appeared on the threshold.

"Here's a box here," the man said, speaking respectfully enough, "which we should wish to be allowed to examine, if you could oblige us with the key."

Gilbert handed the man the bunch of keys just as he had received it from his wife—the key in question separated from the rest.

"You will find what you are looking for in that box," he said.



## CHAPTER VI.

GILBERT ALONE.

THAT missing link which had been wanting to connect Gabrielle Penmore with the foul deed of which she was accused was now found, and when the adjourned inquest had brought its labours to a close the verdict arrived at by the jury was entirely unanimous. It was to the effect that "Diana Carrington had died from the effects of a certain poison, called laudanum, and that there was every reason to suppose that the said poison had been administered by Gabrielle Penmore,"—in short, it was a verdict of wilful murder. Words seem tame and ineffective instruments when we have to deal with such a situation as this which is now before us. We are used to such phrases as "wilful murder." They are found every day in our newspapers. We do not realise the full meaning of half that we read. We see, perhaps, at the head of a column "awful shipwreck—loss of one hun-

dred lives." But what does this really convey to us? What do we see of the terrible struggling with the icy dark water, the wild giddy whirling of the waves sucking down each one of those hundred men, rushing into his ears, his mouth? What do we know of the pressure of the water upon his chest with such dreadful weight? What do we know of the convulsive sobs with which he gasps for the breath which is to come no more, or of the wild panic which shoots through his mind with the conviction that this is the end? We read the words which imply all this, but they fail to convey to us the full horror of the situation.

And how can any combination of phrases give in this present case any idea of the full force of the blow which had fallen upon Gabrielle Penmore and her husband? In most cases misery such as this is approached gradually. Those on whom the terrible machinery of justice is to be exercised generally get used to the sight of it first. They are familiar with inquests and prison-walls and custody. To be brought in contact with these is a necessary part of their lives, one of the accidents which they expect. But in this instance all was widely different. Here was a young lady brought up

from her earliest infancy in a house where she was carefully sheltered from the very approach of evil, where violence and crime was kept at such a distance that she had hardly known of their existence ; here was this same young creature suddenly, and with no preparation whatever, brought into a situation which might well have shaken the most hardened nerves, and caused even a veteran criminal to quail.

From the moment of the finding of that terrible verdict Gabrielle Penmore became a prisoner ; not indeed a condemned prisoner under punishment, but still an accused person, suspected of a crime, and deprived of liberty.

Yes, the men came *to take her away*. They were policemen, and they had their warrant. There was nothing to be done. They were perfectly civil men, but as insensible as if they had been mere machines for executing justice. "They must do their duty," they said, as Gilbert looked at them with glaring, dangerous eyes. He asked if he could at least go with them to the prison ? "O yes," the men answered, "he could go if he liked. There was a cab at the door. One of the constables must go inside, the other might ride on the box."

And Gabrielle herself, how did she bear

this terrible ordeal? She shed no tear, nor uttered any sound of lamentation. She only clung still to her husband, nor ceased to hold his hand for a moment. "You will not leave me till you must," she whispered; "ask them to let you hold me." She was afraid of being literally taken into custody. One of the men hastily interposed to say that there was "no need to hold the lady. He and his mate must keep close alongside, that was all." Even in that moment of agony Penmore felt that there was delicacy in the behaviour of these men, and was grateful.

Then they went on their way—the whole party together. Gabrielle turned as she passed through the door of the little dining-room and lingered for a moment, as if bidding her home farewell. It was luckily dark now, and so they got into the cab without attracting attention. The cabman himself seemed but little interested in the nature of his job. He was an old man, and it was not the first tragic use to which his vehicle had been put.

They were just about to start when the poor servant-girl came running out of the house, carrying a bundle. She had put up a few things which she had collected at haphazard.

Incongruous and heterogeneous odds and ends, which she thought might by possibility be of some use to her mistress. The tears came into Gabrielle's eyes at this, and she took the girl's hand and pressed it affectionately as they drove away.

The wheels of the cab had actually begun to turn, and were grinding against the kerbstone of the pavement, when a woman, whom Gabrielle recognised at once for Jane Cantanker, came suddenly forward out of the darkness and drew near to the window of the vehicle. Appearing thus almost as if she had sprung up out of the earth, she walked for a moment or two by the side of the cab, and peered into the dark corner in which Gabrielle was seated, gazing upon her with devouring insatiable eyes. Keeping beside the cab, till at last the driver had urged his horse into a trot, this woman, without uttering one single word, made her hate so felt by the poor prisoner on whom her eyes were fixed, that Gabrielle could not repress a faint cry of terror as she shrunk back yet farther into the corner and caught her husband by the hand.


"O Gilbert," she cried, as Cantanker fell back, "that dreadful woman again! I feel sure

that she will never rest satisfied till she has got my life."

Gilbert pressed the small hand that lay in his, and tried to answer in a cheering tone and to make light of the circumstance. But his own heart was very heavy, and at such a time it was but natural that such an occurrence should make an impression of the most ghastly and painful sort. The policeman, sitting rigid upon the opposite seat of the cab, stared hard at Gilbert, as if he expected some explanation of that apparition at the cab-door. There was none forthcoming, however. Penmore sat motionless and lost, gazing into the street as they drove slowly along. His mind was like a mirror; it received the impression of the objects which came before it, but lost them again as soon as their images had passed away from its surface. They travelled mainly along the poorer sort of streets, the cabman seeming to have, as is the case with some of the fraternity, a preference for these over the gayer and more distinguished thoroughfares. On that outer surface of Gilbert's mind—whose inner depths were tenanted with such sad and serious thoughts—the very names inscribed above the shops, the labels on the goods in the windows,

may the very prices attached to them, and the invitations to try their quality, addressed, often in comic terms, to the public, were each and all temporarily reflected. Nor did he fail to note how the cab, and its living freight, were observed and silently commented on by every policeman whose beat lay along their line of route, and each one of whom appeared, however quickly they passed him by, to understand the case thoroughly, exchanging always some telegraphic signal or other with the constable who sat upon the box. These things he noted with his outward senses; but never a one of them was able to dispossess, even for a moment, those dread thoughts which had sole possession of his mind, and held their own there undisturbed.

And so they passed through other streets that were busy, populous, and alive. The shops were lighted up brilliantly here, and multitudes of passengers were hurrying hither and thither, all free to go where they liked and do what they liked. Gilbert and his wife—a prisoner—sat and looked mechanically out of the windows at the passers-by, and freedom seemed a strange thing, and wore an altogether new aspect to both of them.



It was a long drive, but at last they came to the end of it, and the cab drew up suddenly at one of the small doors pierced in the walls of Newgate. Let the reader try to picture to himself such a case as this, and he may form some idea of what tortures the husband, even more than the wife, was called upon to endure. To see his dear Gabrielle carried off to prison; to be powerless to prevent it; to be unable to do more than follow her to the hideous felon's door, where for the time he must leave her; to be unable to move the calm officials, whom in the frenzy of his misery he sought to convince that it must all be some mistake—a thing that could and would be speedily set right! “Gabrielle, Gabrielle,” he cried, as she passed down the whitewashed corridor of the prison out of his sight. “Give her back to me!” he cried, seizing in his madness the warder by the throat—“give her back to me—or let me go with her!”


What could he do? He was overpowered in a moment. The very coolness and good nature of the turnkey whom he had assailed had something of baffling about it. “You’ll get an order, sir,” said the man, settling his disordered cravat, “and then you’ll see her



whenever you like. And in the interium there's no harm will come to her. There's the matron to look after her, and she'll be as safe and comfortable—your good lady will—as if she was at home.”

It was the beginning and the end of his rebellion. He would gulp down his rage and his misery together, and only allow them way when he was alone. The ravings of his indignation couldn't help her, and they might do her an injury. Her keepers might be set against her, and they had the power to vex her in a hundred petty ways. He did not think they would, from what he had seen—but they might.

He went home that night to a solitude that was almost unbearable. The house was deserted, except by the one miserable servant Charlotte; for Cantanker, the funeral being over, and Gabrielle Penmore in custody, had gone away to lodgings of her own hard by. It was more lonely and sad than words can tell. It was just the time when all the worst features of any case would be certain to present themselves; and now they all came before poor Gilbert, and ranged themselves over against him in murderous array. The evidence was, as we have seen, of the most damning kind.



It appeared now to be complete ; this last link which had been discovered seemed so conclusive. Who could stand against such an accumulation of facts as were now got together? Gilbert's legal knowledge fitted him in a peculiar way to judge how great the force of those facts was. In the dark lonely house he sat and quailed before the thought of them. Yes ! he quailed—the hero of our tale, and I do not hesitate to present him as doing so. Consider the issue that was at stake. It was not some question of property that was to be decided. It was not even some fine that was impending, some minor punishment that threatened. It was death. That frail delicate woman, whom he loved, and every pore of whose skin was precious to him, was actually in peril of her life ; might meet—unless something could be done to avert it—a violent death at the hands of the executioner. At such a thought a man must quail, if he has the power of feeling. He may rally afterwards, but he must tremble at first.

As he sat with his head in his hand immersed in these reflections, there came a feeble tap at the door, and the servant-of-all-work appeared hesitatingly at the end of the room, with a pair of candles, and a cup of tea which

she had prepared. The poor wretch was frightened out of her wits, and her eyes were swelled with crying. Gabrielle had been so kind to her and had won her love, and she had been in tears all the evening. She burst out again when Penmore assured her that her mistress would be made comfortable for the night, and would have a bed to sleep upon. The girl had had a vision of a stone dungeon and chains from the moment that Gabrielle had left the house. She was comforted by the thought of the bed.

With the bringing of those lights into the room a change had come over Gilbert's naturally courageous and energetic spirit. To sink down into a condition of despondency, to give up hope and remain a prey to inactive sorrow, was not the part of a man,—was, above all, not the way to help his dear Gabrielle. No, he would give way no longer. She was innocent, and he would stir heaven and earth to prove it. There must be a way out of the dark intricacies of this labyrinth, and that way it should be his business to find. Heaven would help him, he prayed and believed, and would make the way plain, and those prison-walls should be thrown open yet, and Gabrielle should pass out of them and be his once more.

He wondered now that they had ever complained of their poverty or of any thing else in the time before this trouble, and when, at any rate, they were together. Such a state of things seemed happy indeed now. Might they but attain to it again, there should be no more complaints.

Gilbert sat on long into the night occupied with these and the like reflections, twisting and turning over in his mind all the various questions suggested by the events of the last few days. But he could make nothing of it. Visions of his poor Gabrielle *in prison* came up continually before him; and then all his thoughts began to weave themselves into a sort of pattern, and the same things kept coming round and round in succession. Policemen, doctors, chemists, the figure of the coroner, the face of one of the members of the jury—complete all but one eye, that one missing feature too he was obliged to strain every faculty to supply, as if his life depended on it; but when he had got it, behold the mouth was gone next, and presently the jurymen himself was gone, and the vacant place left by his removal troubled him not a little. Still it all went round and round; was it a

pattern or was it a tune? There was always something wanting, whatever it was, and after that something he was obliged to strain. Round and round—it was neither a pattern nor a tune; it was a dance, a chain-figure, in and out, round and round. Policemen, doctors, chemist, coroner, incomplete jurymen—but what a strange place in which to hold an inquest, the garden of Governor Descartes, in the West Indian island! Perhaps they met there, though, on account of the serpent. For the serpent, winding in and out, and still pursuing his course round and round, kept the pattern, the tune, the dance, figure, or whatever it was—O, what was it?—kept it together. If he could but follow it, or if it were but complete! Let it be complete; let him grasp it, or let it leave him in peace. No; he must go on with it, and the serpent's head never once showing the whole time, only the shining scales of his body gleaming at intervals between the policeman and the doctor, between the chemist and the coroner, binding them all together, and yet—what folly, —letting them all slip through at last.

He was yet only half asleep, but when he fell quite asleep it was not much better, for

still he went on with the same miserable work in his dreams; only now he knew that it *was* a dream, and that there would be an awakening, when the policeman, and the chemist, and the coroner, and the winding glittering snake would leave him in peace at last. They did leave him in peace at last, and he slept—dreamless—in the great leather chair.


When Gilbert awoke it was broad daylight. The night had passed away then, and the world was alive again. But where was he? What had happened? Where was—Gabrielle?

Ah, it is a terrible thing that first time of waking after some dreadful thing has happened! Better, one is apt to think, to have kept awake with the truth before one's eyes, than to have got away from it for a season, only that it may come back again with the deadlier force. When Gilbert woke, and found that he had passed the night in wild dreams and fantastic imaginings, only to wake to a worse horror than all, and to know that it was real, he wished that he had not slept. Yes, it was true. Gabrielle was not there. They had been parted all night. She was away. She was in prison.

But it was daytime now, and very shortly he would be able to see her. There was consolation in that, at any rate. Quick as thought he was out of the house and away to the prison. As he passed along the street he could not help thinking, as he looked in the faces of the passengers whom he encountered, that there was not one of them—not one—who could, be his troubles what they might, have such a terror and such an anxiety pressing down upon his soul as this which was gnawing at his own heart.

Still he pressed on and on; and when he had reached the dreadful door in the prison-wall of Newgate, it seemed to him as if he had trod on air all the way; nor could he remember a single circumstance connected with his transit from his home to that place.

He was too early to obtain admission to the prison. The gaoler mentioned the hour when he might return, and told him that in the mean time he could not do better than apply to the governor of the prison for an order such as would admit him at the proper time.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A GREAT TRUST.

THERE is a sort of numbness which comes over us in seasons of extraordinary trial, which seems to be expressly provided to shield us from the full force of the trouble—whatever it may be—which we are passing through. The truth does not show itself to us at first in grim nakedness, but in something veiled and obscured by reason of the dimness which comes over our faculties, descending along with the shock. It is probable that in dreams and when afflicted with sad night-thoughts we have most of us known greater horror—though in no real trouble maybe at the moment—than when real misery has come upon us. The imagination has been preternaturally keen in seizing the imaginary misery, but has been dull when it had a terrible reality to deal with.

Gilbert Penmore felt something of this numbness as he followed the turnkey down



the corridor which led to the cell in which his poor little wife was shut up. Some incident, such as the grating of a bolt or the heavy slam of a well-fortified door, would now and then for an instant bring a part of the truth before him, and dissipate for an instant the mist which hung over his perceptive faculties. At such seasons a shudder would pass through his frame, and the heart would sink within him; but presently the dim feeling would descend again, rendering all things indistinct. So there have been travellers who, lost in a strange land, wandering on in utter darkness, have for a moment, while a lightning-flash endured, seen every feature of the country through which they were passing, and presently have lost it all again, as the darkness has again fallen over the scene.

It was one of these lightning-flash moments of revelation, in which all things come out in vividest reality, when the door of Gabrielle's cell was unfastened, and Gilbert was admitted to her place of confinement.

A figure that looked small, and weak, and helpless in the extreme started up, and Gabrielle rushed forward to meet him. For a moment they were locked in each other's arms,

but they were not alone, and with strange, though it must be owned not inquisitive, eyes upon them could give no way to those transports of love, and joy, and sorrow, which they longed so eagerly to indulge. They sat down side by side in the farthest corner of the cell, and for a time could not speak.

That consciousness that what they said was overheard kept both of them silent, even when the first overwhelming emotion which attended such a meeting had to some extent passed away; and when at last they did exchange a few words, it was in an undertone, and not yet of the momentous matter with which the hearts of both were full.

"Did you miss me in the evening?" asked Gabrielle, who was the first to speak. "Did you get some sleep?"

She sat with her husband's hand in hers, and could even smile upon him, so great was her contentment to have him there beside her. She could forget the future, for the time, in the enjoyment of the hour. But with him it was very different. His anxiety was too devouring, too terrible for any sensation of happiness to co-exist with it. Here perhaps was shown

the difference of their natures; or it may have been that Gabrielle's fears being for herself were less terrible than those of her husband, whose apprehension was for another, and that other—his wife.

By degrees they got to be more accustomed to that thought of not being alone, and were able to talk, though still in an undertone, of those important issues which it was absolutely necessary they should discuss. One of the sessions of the court was just about to open, and it was thought likely that the trial would take place almost immediately. It was of the utmost importance, then, that no moment should be lost in taking the necessary steps for the preparation of the defence. Gilbert explained this to his wife, and told her how it would be necessary that he should leave her very shortly, in order that he might see to this all-important matter without a moment's delay.

In one instant a thought, which had dimly flitted through his own mind, along with other misgivings generated by the present trouble, was put before him, no longer as a wild dangerous fancy, but as a thing deserving to be immediately and seriously considered, if not

promptly acted upon. It had crossed Penmore's mind that he himself was the right person to stand between Gabrielle and the danger which threatened her; and now he found that this, which he had looked upon almost as a crude fancy, was with her nothing less than a fixed idea,—a certainty to which she clung with all the force of her nature.

“Why, Gilbert,” she whispered, “have you ever doubted who must help me at this time? shall any body fight my battles but you?”

He gazed at her in silence, and made no reply. It was the thought of his heart, the crude imagining which he had dismissed, put before him in a new light; the venture proposed by her who had so much at stake—nothing less than her life.

“Is there any thing to prevent it?” she asked in visible alarm; “is it against the law?”

“No, Gabrielle, no,” answered her husband, gazing at her as if still in doubt; “it is not against the law. I might not be witness for you, it is certain; but I know

of no law to prevent me from defending you."

"Then it is settled Gilbert, is it not?"

Penmore still paused. A great struggle was going on within him. How ought he to act in this strange and surely unprecedented position? As to his instinct, it prompted him to accede at once to Gabrielle's request. But—and then a host of "buts" rose up in terrible array against his doing so. As to the thing being, though consistent with the law, yet contrary to usage, that, and the thought of what people might say, he was determined wholly to disregard. There was too much at stake for questions of etiquette to receive consideration. Those he could dismiss at once. But was he the best man? that was the thought which made him hesitate even now, with Gabrielle holding his hand and looking in his face, as she sat there in the prison waiting for his answer. She shook his hand gently with a little impatient movement, like a favourite claiming attention:

"Gilbert, why don't you answer me? What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking of what you have said,

Gabrielle," he answered; "it is a thing which demands to be thought over, as one would consider an act on which life or death depends."

"But it is *my* life or my — my — death which depends upon it," she said, "and I am ready to run the risk, Gilbert."

"You ready—but am I ready?" asked her husband; "if there is a stronger man than I who could fight for your life with mightier force, or a more skilful, who could defend you with more subtle art—"

"But there is not, Gilbert," said the poor prisoner simply.

"If there were such an one," continued Gilbert, almost as if speaking to himself, "it would be my duty to seek him out and secure his aid at once."

"But there is not," said the wife again; "and if by any chance there were, any such strength and skill possessed by him would be more than counterbalanced by the life-interest in what is at issue, which you would have, and he could not, and which would inspire you with both strength and wisdom such as no one could resist."

"There is some force in that, indeed," said

Gilbert in a low voice; "but what if that very sense of how much there is at stake, and what the issue of the trial is to me, should not only fail to give me the strength and ability, but should paralyse me for the time, and strip me of what I may already possess."

"It would not be so, Gilbert," said Gabrielle, "I know. In a smaller matter it might be, but not in this. You would be nerved, not unnerved, by the thoughts you speak of."

A change had come over Gabrielle Penmore. She seemed to be possessed of more strength now than when in less certain danger. The hand of death was held over her now, and seemed about to grasp her. The valley of the shadow lay before her, and yet she flinched not. She who had so quailed before the mere threats of the servant Jane Cantanker, or at the thought of an inquest being held in the house in which she lived, was—now with the prison-walls of Newgate encircling her about, with a trial before her in which it was to be a question of life or death—endued with a strange and inexplicable courage, such as she could not herself understand. The foreshadowing of a possible danger had scared her

more, as it sometimes will, than the danger itself when it had come upon her.

Penmore looked at his wife with amazement. The trial through which she was passing seemed to be developing new qualities in her.

"Gilbert," she pleaded once more, "you and you only shall save me. I feel sure that you must do this, and no one else. Why, I should not wish to owe my life to any one but you."

"Gabrielle, it shall be as you say," cried her husband; "I will not hesitate more. The strength of your conviction seems to have something almost ominous about it. I accept the omen, and will from this time allow no doubt or misgiving to come between me and this great undertaking."

Gabrielle would fain have put her arms about his neck, and so have thanked him for thus acceding to her wish; but they were not alone, and, because of this, both were obliged to put a strong restraint upon their words and actions. She could only press his hand speechless.

Gilbert, too, was silent for a time. The thought of this that he had undertaken to do



was an overwhelming one, and absorbed him almost too much for speech. He would allow no misgiving now, however. The die was cast. He would carry out what he had resolved to do to the utmost of his ability; but he would not re-consider the determination which he had taken.

Presently they began to speak of other things. Gabrielle was full of anxiety for her husband's comforts. Even at such a time as this, her woman's care for these did not slumber.

"You will get nothing to eat now I am away," she said. "You will have no regular meals, I know. You will be uncomfortable and wretched in every way, I am certain."

And then she extorted promises from him that he would not let himself be starved—that he would keep up good fires, and, above all things, that he would never let the hope of a happy termination to their present troubles flag within him. Moreover, she sent all sorts of messages to the servant, Charlotte, giving her directions how to order the household during her mistress's absence, so that all things should be well arranged, as far as the thing was possible.

And there were times when the two sat quite silent, hand in hand—times when they could not speak, or at any rate not with any one by to hear their words. They had the sense of being together at such seasons, and that alone was much.

At last the moment came when they could be together no longer. The time allowed for such prison visits as these was limited; and even had it not been so, they must still have separated, as there was much work for Gilbert to do, and work that might not be delayed.

The parting was a bitter one. It was true that it was not for long, as Gilbert was to return next day, and every day till—till it was over. But for him to leave her there, a prisoner,—for her to be so left was bitter torture to both; and Gabrielle's courage, which had stood so firm but now, was fairly broken down when the moment came for saying good-bye. "She would see him again to-morrow, would she not? But O, the time between!" And she broke into such bitter sobs as could not be restrained.

"Come away, sir, come away," whispered the gaoler to Gilbert. "You'd only make

her worse if you was to stay; besides, that can't be."


"Look here, sir," the man said when they got outside the door, repeating the consolation which he had administered before, "she'll be well looked after, your good lady will, and be kep' comfortable and easy in so fur as it's possible. So don't you go fretting about her, or making yourself uneasy in your mind, because it's no use."

In the corridor they met the matron; and it was a sort of comfort to Gilbert to see that she was a woman, at any rate, of agreeable aspect, and pleasant to speak to,—a woman with resources, strong in common sense, and with power to influence others,—one who would execute well and conscientiously what she had to do,—a person, in fact, fit for such an office as it had come to her lot to fill. To her Penmore in earnest terms recommended the poor prisoner whom he had just left, entreating the matron to be very kind and gentle to her; to remember that she was not there under punishment, but in confinement only; and to be with her herself as much as might be. And there was comfort to him afterwards in the recollection of a certain trustworthiness

in the matron's manner as she promised to do all that lay in her power, all that was consistent with the prison regulations, to mitigate the sufferings which belong inevitably to a state of captivity.

The poor fellow wanted some consolation as he walked away, and felt that he was leaving his wife behind in a gaol reserved as a place of confinement for the worst malefactors.

But there was work to do, and much of it. It was necessary first to select a colleague who could be associated with him in the conduct of this momentous business,—some one to whom he could confide certain parts of the arrangements for the defence,—a man, too, in whom he could himself have confidence, with whom he could consult, and on whose advice he could place reliance. And such a man he thought he knew of; one with whom he had become acquainted during the long time that he had been in the habit of attending the law-courts. To him he would go at once; and having secured his assistance, it would next be necessary to consider what line should be adopted in preparing the defence, and what witnesses could be found whose evidence




would be of service. To these tasks then he now applied himself,—with what effect we shall not know yet, nor altogether, till that great day of the trial comes, which will put his work to the test.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A DEADLY HATRED.

IN the very heart of the city of London, where the noise and roar of its traffic is at its loudest, where the crowd of human beings is at its thickest, and the movement among vehicles of every description the most incessant, there rises, dark, massive, unshapely, a huge mass of forbidding-looking masonry, which forces itself painfully on the attention of the passer-by. This building rises to no great altitude, though it covers a considerable amount of space. It is chiefly its large extent, its strange clumsy solidity, and a certain blind look which it has, occasioned by the almost total absence of windows, which appeal to your curiosity, and incline you to step aside out of the concourse of persons, for ever hurrying past, and gaze up at the ungainly pile with an interest mixed with awe. This edifice, which is built at a corner where two



streets join, and where there is an open space of irregular shape, and surrounded by mean, squalid-looking houses, presents on the side which gives on the street, where the greatest amount of traffic goes on, no break whatever in its impregnable wall, nor gives any indication whatever of any means of ingress or egress. In the other wall, which faces the irregular open space just spoken of, there are two or three small doors, approached by mean, rough flights of steps, and remarkably out of proportion as to their size with the huge building to which they give admittance. If this structure was a mass of rock growing solid out of the solid earth, it could hardly seem more firm or less liable to destruction. It could hardly be more silent or more solitary, standing as it does in the midst of London city, and with the hum of men and the noise of their doings going on all round about it, if it were situated in the midst of a vast plain, or on the top of some isolated mountain. The walls on the side which stands in the great thoroughfare are smooth, from contact with the incessant passers-by; and that very smoothness seems to make them look all the harder and more relentlessly and coldly strong.

And what can this place, so huge and silent, and that seems to have such small sympathy with the hurry and bustle which goes on all round about it,—what can this place be? It is a prison. Those small doors, spoken of above as piercing one of its walls, are either closely shut and barred, or guarded by the police; and over one of them there hangs, in grim indication of the nature of the building to which it gives admittance, a set of iron fetters.

We are, in fact, outside the gaol of Newgate. One of those great facts, without whose presence among us we might, immersed as we are in the pursuit of business or pleasure, forget the existence of crime and the necessity for its punishment, is here before us. Such appeals to our senses are met with in this world from time to time. We are apt to forget the crimes which disfigure our commonwealth till we are reminded of them by the sight of a prison or a prison-van, just as we forget all about death till we meet a funeral, or pass an undertaker's shop.

It is twelve o'clock at night, and darkness lies over the great city. The number of passengers whose garments come in contact with



the stones of the prison wall has diminished very greatly, though it has not yet reached its minimum. How hurriedly they pass along, and how few have leisure to steal a glance up at those frowning walls, or to think for what purpose they are there! This is in fact no lounging-place for idlers. Few come this way, few frequent this dingy ill-favoured locality, unless brought here by business of some kind or other. It is an ugly corner of the world this, and no man would seek it out for his pleasure.

And yet there is one person who has for some considerable time occupied a position here who would not seem to have been brought to this place by any matter connected with business on this particular night. Standing on the edge of the pavement which borders that open space already spoken of, on the side opposite to that occupied by the gaol-wall, is the figure of a woman, motionless as a statue, dark as a fate.

The woman is dressed in common garments, and is closely muffled in a woollen shawl; and she has stood in this one place for upwards of an hour without stirring. From the position which she has taken up she can

see the whole of the edifice opposite from the point where a small court-yard divides it from the court-house of the Old Bailey to where it is bounded by the busy thoroughfare of Newgate Street. All this length of wall, together with the indications of buildings within it which appear above the *chevaux-de-frise*, she has continually scanned with a curious yet satisfied eye. No circumstance connected with that piece of solid masonry escapes her; no incident connected with the gaol, such as the entrance or exit of an official at one of the doors or a change of duty among the policemen about the place, is lost upon her. Her eye sweeps the whole building from end to end and from side to side with a sort of grim pleasure, such as this gloomy spectacle does not for the most part afford.

By and by she moves, and crossing this open space, in which carts laden with hay and straw are standing in considerable numbers, waiting for next day's market, she arrives beneath the very prison-walls on the opposite side of the way, and commences a nearer examination of them. She passes along under the massive stone-work, scrutinising it as she walks by. She gazes up at the small closed

doors, peering into their fastenings and their hinges of iron. She follows thus the entire course of the wall along the Old Bailey and Newgate Street; and then pursuing that thoroughfare, she turns aside into the narrow streets about Newgate Market, and seeks to get some glimpses of that eastern side of the gaol which the market bounds.

There was less apparently to satisfy her here, and she soon came back to the region she had just left, seeming to find a pleasure now in gratifying her sense of touch—as she had formerly that of sight—by feeling the walls with her fingers, suffering her hands to drag against them as she walked along, and touching the iron-work of the small but massive doors, which were, as has been said, on the Old Bailey side of the prison.

She reached in this way the extreme southern limit of the building, where the thoroughfare in which it stands begins to narrow; and here she stood for a while feeling the stones with her hands, and actually, as it were, caressing them with a sort of unnatural fondness. It was a strange sight to see this woman hanging thus around the place; and she was not unobserved by the policemen about

the prison. But they were used to queer things happening there, and knew that when some young fellow new to the ways of crime got into "trouble," and came to be confined in Newgate, it was no very unusual thing for his mother or his "young woman" to come and haunt the place where the son or the lover, as the case might be, was going through his novitiate of gaol-life. So they took no notice of Jane Cantanker—for it was she—and left her free to follow her own devices, and bestow all the blandishments she felt inclined upon the Newgate stone-masonry.

She had wandered down to this place to see and judge of, with her own senses, the strength of the prison in which the murderer of her dear mistress was kept secure; and now as she estimated its mighty proportions and touched its massive stones, she positively seemed to love it as she gloated over its prodigious power of retention.

"Ah," she said, her triumph at last finding vent in words, and addressing the very stones of the prison-wall, "you're rough, and you're strong, you are, and you're piled up one upon another and fixed together with stiff cement, and there are more of you inside as

hard and as rough as these; and when one wall's passed, there's another ready beyond it, and all the doors are barred with iron and set like these with iron nails; and you've kept in strong men before now, and men that were used to picking locks and forcing bolts, and surely you'll be able to keep a woman safe—a woman with soft white hands, that ar'n't too white though or too soft to commit a murder with, and mix the poison that killed my poor dear lady.”

She looked up again at the great square stones, smoke-blackened and weather-hardened.

“I never thought,” she said, “to have had her safe within such walls as them. When one delay came after another, and with all their inquests and adjournments they failed to make sure of her, what would I have given to have had her shut up here! But it came at last—the end, and the verdict which I heard—‘wilful murder,’ ‘wilful murder,’ ‘wilful murder!’”

As Jane Cantanker uttered these terrible words, a man who had approached without her hearing him—so absorbed was she in her own vindictive joy—came suddenly upon her, and

startled by the sounds, looked hard into her face, as if to see what sort of woman this could be, who awoke the neighbouring echoes with such awful words.

He was a tall stout man this, with a florid happy countenance, and that peculiar light elastic tread which is so often observable in fat people. He looked like the embodiment of health and contentment as he stood in the light of the adjacent gas-lamp, and formed a striking contrast to the grim, malignant-looking woman by his side.

Cornelius Vampi, whom the reader has no doubt recognised from this description, was just returning from a long expedition into the Borough. He had been obliged to make this journey in search of certain drugs which were required for the exigencies of the art mystic, and which he was in the habit of getting from a certain Jewish gentleman of his acquaintance who resided in a very obscure back street in Southwark. Our astrologer had got what he required, and was working his way back to his own abode, when, passing through the Old Bailey, he came suddenly, as we have seen, upon Jane Cantanker, and recognised in her

the woman who applied to him for such assistance of a supernatural sort as he was neither able nor willing to afford. This person, and every thing connected with her, was so far from his thoughts at this particular time, that for the moment he was completely bewildered by the encounter. Jane Cantanker on her side was equally unprepared for such a meeting; and so the two remained for some time staring at each other in silence. Cantanker was the first to speak.

"Well," she said, with an air of triumph, "so I have done without your help, you see."

"See!" echoed Vampi; "I see nothing, except that you are here at midnight outside the gaol of Newgate, and talking about wilful murder. What do you mean by 'having done without my help'?"

"I mean that she is here safe and sound within these walls;" and she laid her hand upon the stones as she spoke.

"And who is she?" asked Cornelius.

"The woman against whom your faint heart refused to work a spell—Gabrielle Penmore."

“ ‘Penmore!’ ah, that was the name that I was trying to remember. And who is Gabrielle Penmore? I have never heard the name except from you.”

“What! have you not heard?” asked the woman, with something of contempt. “Do you never read the newspapers?”

“Seldom, if ever.”

“Well, then, read them now, or maybe in a week from this time, and then you’ll see who Gabrielle Penmore is, and how she comes to be here shut up in Newgate; and you’ll see she will be tried for murder—yes, and found guilty too—and hanged in this very street in which we are standing.”

“This is horrible,” said our harmless philosopher, shrinking back mechanically from this tigress of a woman; “most horrible!”

“What’s horrible?” she asked.

“Why, to hear the vindictive spirit in which you talk. It is revengeful, malignant—horrible, I say again.”

“It’s nothing of the kind,” the woman answered. “It’s justice, that’s what it is. She’s committed a crime, and it’s only justice that she should suffer for it.”

“Yes, but justice doesn’t demand that you



should show this fiendish glee. If even what you say is true, and some poor wretch stained with such crimes as you have been talking of does lie imprisoned within these mighty walls, that is no reason why you should triumph—should actually seem to gloat over the misery of one who should now, at any rate, be an object for your pity rather than your hatred.”

The woman came close up to Cornelius. “You talk of ‘gloating,’ ” she said; “that is a good word. I do gloat, and I mean to do so. I tell you that, since she’s been in confinement, I come here every night to gloat. Why, I’ve been round to all the different gaols in London and about it, to compare ’em with this one, and to see whether I’d have liked any one of ’em better for her prison, and they’re none of them to compare to this. There’s some of ’em are built slighter, and some of ’em are too light and airy, and some too handsome, and not looking like prisons at all; but this—ah, this is something like a gaol. This looks hard, and cold, and pitiless, and strong; a great bare wall with no windows to break it up or make you think there’s pleasant rooms inside. It *is* a prison, and it looks *like* a prison, with fetters, iron fet-

ters, hanging up above the door, and a gallows, as I'm told,"—here she whispered,—“shut up in an inner court, and ready at an hour's notice. Something like a prison that.”

Cornelius again drew back, and gazed upon this terrible creature with a mixed wonder and dismay.

“Stop !” he cried, “I will hear no more of this. What have I done that you select me to listen to these monstrous ravings? First of all you come to ask me to give you a charm against your enemy, to curse her, to inflict some supernatural evil upon her; and now you bid me listen to words so cruel, so unwomanly, that the sound of them makes me shrink from you as I never thought to shrink from any human being.”

Cornelius Vampi spoke with horror in his tones—for he was a man, as we have seen, of a benevolent disposition, and possessed of a kind and gentle heart, and the violence of this woman shocked and horrified him. The vulgarities which characterised her speech, too, made the thing worse.

“Look at these stones,” she continued; “she's walled up inside them. She'll not get out easily, will she? I bless these stones, I

tell you," she continued savagely, "because they're so strong and solid. They'd defy a stronger frame than hers."

"The woman's mad," thought Vampi to himself; and the reflection consoled him. He began to think that she was suffering under some delusion, and that all he had seen and heard might thus be accounted for. He remained for a time watching her. She had ceased to take any notice of his presence now, and was again feeling the stones with her hands, and muttering about their strength as she had done before. "Out-and-out prison this," said the woman.

The conviction of her insanity impressed itself more than ever upon Vampi's mind as he observed her, and the horror with which she had originally inspired him was now changed to compassion. A cold drizzling rain was beginning to fall.

"Don't you think you had better go home?" he asked: "I will walk part of the way with you if you like."

"No," she answered; "I shall stop here. At all events I would not go with you. You refused me the assistance that I wanted, and now I wish to have nothing to do with you.

Leave me! You're one of the faint-hearted ones—that's what you are."

Cornelius paused for a moment, as if uncertain how to act. He looked up and down the street. Then he seemed to have made up his mind, and went his way up the Old Bailey in the direction of Newgate Street.

Cantanker watched him mechanically as he passed along under the gas-lamps, and she saw that when he came to where the policemen were grouped about the prison-door he stopped and spoke to one of them, and pointed as he did so to where she was standing. Then she saw him no more, but observed that the policeman who had been addressed was advancing towards her with the leisurely step which belongs to his tribe.

"Come, missus," he said, speaking kindly enough, "what are you up to?"

The police, and more especially those who guarded the prison-doors, were in the eyes of Jane Cantanker at this time more angels of justice than mere men. She was ready to do any thing they bade her.

"O, sir," she said, "I'm not doing any harm. But you'll take care of her, won't you, and keep her very close?" For her there was

no other prisoner in that gaol of Newgate but Gabrielle Penmore.

The man had been told by Cornelius that he thought there was a poor mad creature hanging about there; so he humoured her according to time-honoured usage, pretending to know what she meant.

"O yes," he said, in a reassuring tone, "*we'll* look after her,—keep her as snug as a mouse in a trap."

"That's right," said the woman, drawing in her breath; "the trap's a strong one."

"Uncommon strong," the man replied. "Now suppose you leave it to us and go home; why, it's raining fit to drown any one."

"I'll do any thing you wish, sir," said Jane Cantanker; "that I will."

"Well, then, go home and get to bed,—that's what you'd better do. It's bad enough for us to be standing about in the wet that's obliged."

"I'll go home at once," replied the other; "and I'm sorry you should have to get wet. Good-night, sir."

"Good-morning you mean! Why, it's past one o'clock." He stood and watched her as she sped away in the rain. "She's got

some muck or other into her head," he said to himself; "but she does as she's told, at any rate, which is more than all of them will." The policeman had a better three-quarters at home.

The neighbourhood was at its quietest. The traffic in the busy thoroughfare which bounded the gaol on its northern side had reached its minimum. Traffic there was there always, but now and for the next two hours it would be less than at other times. It was just the hour in the morning when the City is comparatively quiet, when the night noises are nearly at an end, and the morning noises have hardly begun. The rain too helped to empty the streets. It was not a time for any body to be out who could possibly help it.

This one person, then, who has just turned from Ludgate Hill into the Old Bailey must doubtless have some pressing reason for passing this way on such a night and at such an hour. He is not very warmly clad, and is evidently very wet already; and yet from the moment of his turning into the thoroughfare just mentioned he ceases to hurry himself, but walks along almost at a leisurely pace, and with his

eyes fixed upon that great frowning mass of darkness—the prison—which, now that the rain has fairly set in, looks more forbidding and ominous than ever.

At last from slow walking, almost lounging indeed, so dilatory is his pace, our passenger presently ceases to advance at all, and arresting his progress altogether, stands upon the edge of the pavement—just where Jane Cantanker stood but a little while before—and gazes up at the prison-walls.

Who is it that comes thus, when other people are sleeping in their warm beds, and takes his station there outside the doors of Newgate? Who is it that disregards the bitter cold and the pouring rain, that he may keep watch over against that dreadful place? His eyes sweep the enclosure of the gaol from side to side and from end to end; and as he looks a dimness comes before them, and presently his lips are moving, though no audible words pass from out of them.

It is Gilbert Penmore. He had promised the poor prisoner within those walls that he would pass outside them in the course of the night, but at some time which should not be specified; for she had said that it would be a

comfort to her, if she were awake and fearful, to think that perhaps at that very moment he was near her, and praying for her in his heart of hearts.



## CHAPTER IX.

### ON THE SCENT.

WE have lately been so much occupied with the main important incidents of our story that we have rather lost sight of one individual who sustains a minor part in the drama which is being enacted before us. The affairs of Julius Lethwaite have recently received but little attention from us; but as the moment is at hand when he will take the part in this story which makes him necessary to its complete development, it is time that we looked him up a little.

As far as business matters go, then, our cynical friend has not been prospering any better than when we last saw him. The reductions which it was necessary for him to make in his expenditure have continued to be necessary still; and those means of replenishing his exchequer which he had talked of at first almost in joke have been resorted to in all

seriousness. Aided and abetted by his musical friends, our harmless cynic has actually obtained admission into the orchestra of one of our leading theatres, which provides him with what we figuratively call "bread." For him who has never done any thing except for pleasure, this is really hard work. Night after night he is there at his post behind the two drums, attentive and watchful, as every true drummer should be. The morning rehearsals too find him at his place; he is among the most punctual of performers, and has never once been fined for non-attendance.

But Julius Lethwaite is just now under a cloud, with whose overshadowing gloom his own affairs have nothing to do. His friends—for in spite of his losses he still retains a large number of such—are all struck by the change which they detect in him. There is no getting hold of him now, they say, and no getting any thing out of him even when he is got hold of. Of course this is attributed by his circle of acquaintance to his recent misfortunes.

Lethwaite was, however, at this time little inclined for society. This trouble of his friends had come upon him as a blow of the most unexpected sort. His own misfortunes

he had borne, as we have seen, with infinite philosophy, almost with indifference; but this which had descended on his friends had really shaken him. It was *such* a sorrow. Life, character, reputation were at stake. It was not a mere question of money, the difference between a rosewood wardrobe and a deal cupboard, between a luxurious dinner at the club and a chop at the Rainbow. And then Julius really believed in his friends. He thought Mrs. Penmore the most perfect of ladies; and this horrible accusation hurt him as if it had been brought against his own sister. Would that there were more such friends as Julius Lethwaite in the world!—men to whom it is real pain to hear a friend disparaged, and who do not find in the phrase that takes away the character of a chosen companion something remotely gratifying to themselves. Never—never for one moment—had the strange combination of circumstances which seemed to tell so terribly against this unhappy lady shaken Lethwaite's belief in her entire innocence. This man, with all his cynicism, with all his doubts of the existence of good in human nature, with all his readiness to impute bad motives where a good one appeared on the

surface, was as unsuspicious in this case as a child. It was impossible—simply impossible—that there could be even the very faintest ground for this base suspicion, which had arisen out of a series of mistakes which he firmly believed would one day be cleared up. Meanwhile he believed; and even should his reason remain unconvinced, he would hold on to this belief with his will.

He would sit by the hour together pondering over the subject, trying to find out the solution of the difficult riddle, or talking it over with his old friend Jonathan Goodrich, who was as great a believer in the Penmores, and in Gabrielle especially, as Lethwaite himself.

“If I could only help them,” said Lethwaite on one of these occasions,—“if I could only ferret out some circumstance that would clear the mystery up! That there is some such thing to be got at I have no more doubt, Goodrich, than that we are sitting here on each side of the fire. There is something, some little thing, that we have none of us thought of, and which would explain it all, and clear that poor lady from this horrible imputation in a moment.”

"The lady's as innocent of the deed as you or I, sir, that we know," said the old clerk; "but how to prove her so, that's the question."

Then they relapsed into silence again, each sitting staring at the fire, and torturing the subject again and again in his mind.

"I can't rest to-night," said Lethwaite, suddenly rising and putting on his greatcoat and hat. "It is the night before the trial, and I must hear the last tidings, and whether any new discovery may have been made at the eleventh hour. You shall come with me, Goodrich. Even you and I may be of some use or other—who knows?"

"Ah, sir, who knows indeed?" replied the old fellow, highly gratified. They were soon on their way to the house in Beaumont Street.

They found poor Gilbert on that night still engaged with his preparations for the morrow. He was looking sadly ill and worn. Recent events, and the state of horrible anxiety in which he was now continually kept, had told upon him to a terrible extent, and he had got very pale and thin within the last few days, so that any one would have noticed it.

"Well, how do you get on?" asked Lethwaite, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"Hardly as I could wish," replied the poor fellow; "I am obliged to keep *her* spirits up as well as I can, but I am miserably uneasy. The case against us is so strong, and ours wanting in so much.

"Goodrich and I were sitting talking about it all," said his friend; "and I could not resist the desire to see you and inquire if there was any fresh news. So we just came along."

"I am very glad you did. I was driving myself half mad, and unfitting myself for to-morrow's duties altogether." Gilbert paused a little, and then went on: "Do you know what I was thinking of doing, Julius? I was thinking of getting some one to come here and engage in a final search in her room—Miss Carrington's room upstairs, in the bare hope that something may have been overlooked in previous examinations. My reason for wanting some one besides myself to engage in this search is, that I am incompetent to appear as a witness."

"Why, we are the very people," cried Lethwaite, interrupting him. "Come, let us begin at once." Jonathan here has a great mechanical turn, you know, and nothing will escape him, depend upon it."

"I was just going to say," continued Penmore, "that, if you did not mind, I would so much rather have you two than any strangers coming about the place. It is the last chance of strengthening the view which I have taken of the case. But I warn you that it is no sinecure I have proposed; the search I ask for is to be a thorough one."

Lethwaite and the old clerk hastened to reassure him on this point, and the three—Gilbert, Julius Lethwaite, and the old clerk—went up together to the room occupied by the late Miss Carrington, and proceeded to engage in a strict and final search for some indication which might favour the decision which Penmore had come to, that it was knowingly and of her own free will that the deceased had partaken of the drug by which she died; that it had not been given to her, but that she had taken it. It was a connecting link of the last importance—if he hoped to prove that this theory was correct—that he should be able to produce the bottle in which the poison had been kept, and from which she had poured it out and drunk it.

The search now to be engaged in by these three—all deeply interested in its result—was

to be complete and exhaustive. The room was to be subdivided into separate portions, to every inch of which (literally) the fullest and most elaborate examination was to be given. Of these subdivisions each one of the persons engaged in the search was to have one allotted to him; and all the objects of furniture, or whatever else was contained in such allotment, he was to scrutinise with senses sharpened to the very utmost. The bed, the chimney, and fireplace, the wardrobe, the bureau or *escritoire*, the chest-of-drawers, nay the very chairs and tables, the floor and walls of the room, were now, it was resolved, to be subjected to the minutest and most microscopic scrutiny. A pair of steps was provided, that even the cornice from which the curtains hung might be examined; there were screwdrivers and hammers at hand; and the carpet was taken up, in order that any hidden receptacle in the boards of the flooring—should any such exist—might be brought to light. In one word, the apartment was to be searched inch by inch, from end to end, and from side to side, by our three friends.

Methodically and systematically each man took his appointed section; and bit by bit,



beginning with the portion of the floor and wall of the room which came into his division, and going on from thence to each article of furniture or loose object which came within it, proceeded with this last and most exhaustive search, on which so much depended.

Exhaustive, indeed, that search was. Every drawer in any chest-of-drawers or cabinet was taken out; and besides that its contents were examined, the drawer itself was tested, lest it might have any false bottom or false back used as a place of concealment. The covering of a chair, which showed signs of having been ripped open and nailed down again, was once again torn off, and the stuffing ransacked throughout. No pains were spared—no *possible* place where any thing as large as an ounce-phial could be hidden was left untested, however hopeless it might seem. If there was the shadow of a doubt about any thing, each man was ready to give his advice to the other, or help him if physical force was needed. A board in the flooring which shook, though but very little, when trodden upon, was forced up, and the wood-work beneath rigidly examined. Julius Lethwaite, into whose section the fire-grate came, got his arm through the register,

and felt and groped about in the chimney in spite of soot and dirt, thinking that that was a place of concealment where what they sought for might haply lie hidden. And indeed for a brief season those who were engaged in this search did think that this gentleman's courageous exploration was to be rewarded with success. In that dark space above the register his hand encountered some object, which he quickly brought out from its place of concealment, and which actually proved to be a bottle or phial. The other two hastened forward to look at it. Alas, it was not the phial which they were in search of. It had no label, no hint of laudanum inscribed on it; and, to crown all, there was at the bottom of it a small quantity of a dark liquid, which on examination proved to be a remnant of black draught. It had been stuck there, no doubt, by some sufferer who had just swallowed the dose, in days long gone by, to be out of the way, and above all things out of sight.

This was, indeed, a bitter disappointment. Julius Lethwaite, down upon his knees in front of the fire-place, his hands and face covered with soot, presented a picture of discomfort infinitely pitiable, as he held up that

small bottle, and smelt it, and turned it about and about.

"No," he said, "that phial is not the one we are in search of; there is no hint even of laudanum in it." And he put it down on one of the hobs with a sigh.

The others could hardly persuade themselves to give it up. A bottle—a chemist's bottle even—and thrust away in what seemed like a place of concealment—it *must* be what they were in search of. Was Lethwaite sure? was that liquid really the remains of a black draught? The discoverer handed them the bottle. They smelt, and were convinced with loathing.

Lethwaite continued his search behind the register—nay, he even groped among the cinders in the grate; for there had been nothing disturbed since *that night*, and he thought it possible that even some fragments of broken glass might be found there, which would still be better than nothing. But nothing came of his labours, except an increase of sootiness.

All were beginning now to lose hope, and a great sadness had descended upon each one of those present. Their search was nearly over, and had been attended with no sort of

success. The seekers paused in their work; only one, Jonathan Goodrich, going on with it just then. This good man was doing what he had to do with the greatest completeness. He had an especial mechanical turn, it seemed, and was thus particularly well fitted to the undertaking. He was now engaged with that bureau or *escritoire* of which mention has been made, and was subjecting it to every test which his ingenuity could suggest. He had a rule in his hand, and was making some measurements which seemed to puzzle him a little for the moment.

"There is something here," he said presently, "which I do not altogether understand."

Julius Lethwaite got up from his position before the grate, and Gilbert from another part of the room came forward; and both stood together in silence behind the old clerk, who was evidently fairly puzzled.

He had got the lid of the *escritoire* open. It was a slanting lid, that was made for writing upon; and when lifted, it disclosed, in the ample space within it, a great variety of small drawers and a row of little recesses, or, as some call them, pigeon-holes, into which pa-

pers may be thrust at pleasure. It was evidently a somewhat old-fashioned piece of furniture, but was—having been at the beginning a handsome and expensive article—solid enough, and in thoroughly good condition.

“That piece of furniture,” said Gilbert, looking on with his friend by his side, “was the property of Miss Carrington herself. She bought it at a second-hand shop, as I think, one day soon after she came here, and had it sent home.”

“Her own, was it?” said Julius. “That makes it the more important to examine it very carefully.” He considered a little while, and then added: “Her own! If we are to find what we are looking for any where, it will be here.”

Jonathan Goodrich had his rule in his hand, and proceeded to make some measurements in the interior of the piece of furniture. The interior of the desk, which occupied the whole upper part of the bureau, was of considerable size. The back of it was, as has been said, divided into drawers and pigeon-holes. There was a row of these last, ten in number, then a row of three long flat drawers

under the ten pigeon-holes, and again under the drawers three very low arches,—a sort of *oubliettes*, where objects not likely to be wanted might be stowed away and forgotten. It was with these last that Jonathan appeared to be just now occupied.

“What I cannot make out,” he said, “is this. These ten pigeon-holes in a row are all of them of the same depth, nine inches; the three drawers beneath them are also nine inches deep; but the arches under the drawers have, as you see, by measurement of this rule, a depth of only five inches.”

Neither of the two lookers-on spoke, but each of them looked hastily down the outside walls, so to speak, of the *escritoire*, to see if there was any thing in its external structure to account for this. There was nothing. The back and sides of this piece of furniture were perfectly smooth and uniform. Next they proceeded to test Goodrich’s measurements. They agreed entirely with his statement. There was a space, of the same height and width as each of these arches, and four inches in depth, unaccounted for. Was that space solid, or was it hollow? The old clerk struck the wood at the back of the arches with the

handle of a screw-driver, and the sound produced certainly appeared to be of a hollow kind.

"It seems to me," he said, "that these arches have a false back."

Those present looked one another in the face for a moment, as if uncertain how to act. Then a candle was introduced into the desk; and being lowered, regardless of the drippings of grease, almost into a horizontal position, those low arches were lighted up, and Jonathan Goodrich looking in was able to see what was inside.

"There are hinges," he cried, much excited, "and key-holes. The backs *are* false, and would let down, if we had the keys to unlock them."

But here there was a difficulty. The key or keys by which these doors were to be opened were not forthcoming, nor had Gilbert any idea where they could be found. He knew that a great many of the keys belonging to the late Miss Carrington had been taken away by the deceased lady's legal adviser, and these might be—probably were—among them. All the keys in the possession of each person present, all that could be collected in the house,

were tried; but in vain. It was too late to send for a locksmith; and at last, after sundry ineffectual attempts had been made with pieces of iron and bent nails to pick the locks, it was decided that the only thing to be done was to force them.

The excitement of those who looked on was now very great. Each felt, and Gilbert Penmore especially, as may easily be believed, how much depended upon what was now disclosed. There was legitimate reason to hope that something of importance might now be revealed: a new field for research had certainly been discovered. The difference between the depth of these arches and that of the drawers and pigeon-holes above them had escaped those who had previously examined the apartment; and it was solely to the minute and scrupulous exactness of the old clerk that their present discovery was to be attributed.

To him now, in virtue of his mechanical turn, the office of breaking open these doors, as they may be called, was delegated. With the aid of a screw-driver and a hammer this was soon accomplished, and the contents of the first of these compartments, beginning with



that on the extreme left, were speedily disclosed to view.

Disappointment for every body. Papers—the whole receptacle was stuck full of papers. The deceased lady had had a turn for business; and the hasty glance which Gilbert allowed himself showed him that these papers bore reference to pecuniary matters, shares in the possession of the deceased, and other things of a like nature. They were swiftly thrust back again, to be examined at some more convenient season, and the central compartment was next forced open.

Disappointment again. Papers again. In this case not so many, and chiefly letters. These also on business matters. Nothing in the shape of a bottle was there, or it would have been detected at once.

There remained now but one more compartment to search, but one more door to break open. On the contents of this receptacle all their hopes depended for fulfilment. Every other place had been searched, and that ineffectually. Men cling to hope so, and dread so much to risk losing the grounds upon which it is based, that these three discontinued their work for a moment, and paused before exa-

mining that last hiding-place, the contents of which were to realise or frustrate their hopes.

The pause was but a short one, however; and Jonathan Goodrich soon had his tools in hand again, and the door of the last compartment was quickly opened.

For one moment it seemed as if disappointment was again in store for the seekers. At first more papers only were disclosed to view; and the heart of poor Gilbert had already sunk at the sight, when suddenly, as the old clerk drew them forth from their place of concealment, something rolled out after them into the desk—something which at one glance all present perceived to be A BOTTLE!

Gilbert seized it mechanically, and hardly knowing what he did. But it was no time for ceremony, and Julius Lethwaite, who had caught sight of one word upon the label, had it out of his hand in one moment, and was holding it up to the light.

“Cornelius Vampi, herbalist and seedsman,” he cried, in violent excitement.

“Great Heaven,” he added, “we are on the eve of some discovery!”

“Why—what do you mean?” asked Gilbert, almost breathless.

"I know him—have known him for some time," cried Lethwaite. "This bottle has come from his shop. He will know all about it."

Meanwhile Gilbert, in turn, had got possession of the bottle, and was examining it with eager scrutiny. It was inscribed "Laudanum," and "Poison," in large characters; then came the name of the vendor as Lethwaite had read it. A small—very small—quantity of dark liquid remained at the bottom of the bottle; only a few drops, such as would be left behind after it had been virtually emptied.

Penmore smelt at these, and handed the bottle to his friend.

"It is what we were in search of," he said. He spoke inquiringly, as if afraid as yet to trust the evidence of his senses.

Lethwaite and Goodrich, in turn, smelt the mouth of the bottle. There was no doubt. The faint peculiar smell of opium was there; that smell which seems to warn the very instinct of a man, and to suggest danger to him, even if he is ignorant of the quality of the drug which emits it. Both Lethwaite and the old clerk gave their opinion, without

hesitation, that the bottle had contained laudanum.

Such a flood of hope and joy came pouring into Gilbert's heart as he heard these words, that he remained for a time absolutely speechless. At last he spoke :

"This Vampi; can he be communicated with at once?"

"He *shall* be communicated with at once," replied Lethwaite. "I will go to him without a moment's delay."

"Shall I go with you?"

This question, after being discussed a little, was decided in the negative. It was thought better that Lethwaite should see the philosopher alone, or accompanied only by Jonathan Goodrich, with whom Vampi was already acquainted. He would talk more readily under such circumstances than in the presence of a stranger. Lethwaite promised, however, to bring the man back with him to Beaumont Street in the course of that same long and eventful night. With that he and his old friend and follower took their immediate departure. The crisis was too important and exciting a one to admit of a moment's unnecessary delay.

For Gilbert, he was not sorry to be for a time alone. The revulsion of feeling from the despondency which he had felt but a short time since, to the wild, almost confident hope, which he believed he might now venture to entertain, was so violent, that it deprived him for a time of all power of self-control, and he felt that it was better just now that he should be alone.

His heart, too, was full of gratitude; and it was good to be alone, that he might express it, if only in a few rough words that were almost inarticulate. Ah, was it possible that there was hope? Were the days at hand when his Gabrielle would be restored to him to be his help-meet and his dear companion?

In the lonely house, and at that lonely hour, when all was still, Gilbert Penmore sank down upon his knees, and buried his face in his hands.

## CHAPTER X.

### AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

SHE whose deliverance out of a great danger is the object of all this hurrying hither and thither of many persons, remains meanwhile a close prisoner within the walls of Newgate, leading a life of great monotony outwardly, but of many inward changes of mind as the tide of feeling ebbs or flows, as hope or fear for the time predominates in her heart.

Her outward life, it has been said, is monotonous in the extreme. The hours set apart for the taking of exercise, for meat and drink, for seeing those who come to visit her, are all unvarying day by day. In all these things a wonderful punctuality and regularity are observed. Then she receives visits from the prison matron, the chaplain, from benevolent ladies, and certain well-meaning, but often injudicious enthusiasts, who all take it for granted—charitably enough—that she is a

guilty woman, and come to urge her to repent of her crime.

There is one missionary gentleman who is especially urgent in this matter. He has been himself a sinner formerly. He has not got a good face, nor a well-shaped head; nor does he impress you agreeably. His features speak of violent passions, and violent struggles, and violent repentance; for the man is no hypocrite. He sees nothing but sin and danger in all directions, and there is little of cheerfulness or comfort in his tenets. He seems actually to gloat over the terrors of religion, and to have little sympathy with its gentle aspects, and even to take but little pleasure in them. This gentleman frightens our poor Gabrielle not a little. He comes to her—naturally timid and self-mistrustful—with threats and promises of vengeance. He has a doctrine of assurance, too, which is terrible—if she does not *feel* that she is saved, if she does not feel assured of the fact, she is lost. Is she converted? can she lay her finger on the day and hour of her actual conversion? If she is not able to do this, she ought to be. She is not able, and the missionary gentleman almost chuckles to see how his theory is borne out.

Evidently all her life has been the life of an unconverted person. This crime which she has committed—for of course, in his estimation she has committed it—is only part of such a life as hers has been. He does not regard the act with any special horror, or look upon it as worse than all the other things she has done throughout her wretched, heathen, unconverted life. All of a piece.

This passionate gentleman prays with her and for her; entreats her to watch for any feelings of conversion and assurance which may come into her heart; and altogether frightens and disturbs her so much, that her husband seeks an interview with the chaplain of the prison, and begs that his (the chaplain's) may be the only religious ministrations which his wife receives, and that on no account she shall be considered guilty, and looked upon as a murderess, till she has been proved to be so before the jury who are to try her. So the passionate gentleman's visits are brought to an end, and he carries his violent countenance and violent doctrines elsewhere, and harasses the poor prisoner no more.

From some of those ladies who visit her Gabrielle would have got more comfort, had



it not been for that conviction of her guilt with which they approached her, and which has been before spoken of. Every word they said was qualified with this feeling. There was a little chill over these sinless ladies, that could not be got rid of. There was a mighty gulf between her and them; a barrier across which they looked and talked, but which might never be, by any means, broken down—the barrier of her guilt.

There was one person certainly whose visits did bring some consolation to the poor suspected creature, and were ever looked forward to eagerly. This was the lady of whom mention has been made already, though very little has been said of her, except that she had been for many years Gabrielle's governess in the West Indies, and was almost the only friend she had in London. The tidings of her pupil's present misfortune had reached Miss Curtis—which was the lady's name—and she had lost no time in hurrying off to see her. Ah, there was real comfort in having such a friend near her—one who had known her from a child, who had known her too long and too well to doubt her for one single moment. The consternation of this good lady at finding in

what a situation her dear pupil had, owing to the strangest combination of circumstances, come to be placed, knew no bounds. The tears of these two were mingled together, unregardful of lookers-on; and many were the long conversations held by them on this terrible subject, while their ingenuity was taxed to the very utmost, but taxed in vain, to try after some reasonable solution of the doubt which hung over the dead lady's fate, and how that poison—since it really was by poison she died—had come to be administered to her. Ah, how Gabrielle longed for some clue to that dark mystery—some proof to show to those who trusted her that their faith might be put to the test no longer!

With this lady Gabrielle could talk of old times; talk of her father, with whom she had always been so great a favourite, and—more painful subject—of her mother, who had not forgiven her for marrying contrary to her will. There appeared reason to believe that this last estrangement was, however, at an end. The news of the awful situation in which her daughter was placed had, it seemed, reached her mother's heart; for the telegraphic despatch which Gilbert had sent off, acquainting Gabri-

elle's parents with her present danger, had been just answered by another, in which it was stated that both her father *and mother* were coming over to England as fast as steam could bring them.


And with this old friend the imprisoned girl—for she was nothing more—could talk at length of the scenes among which she had lived her earliest life. They talked of the house where her childhood had been passed; they went in imagination from room to room, and sat again over their books in the verandah shade. The garden—with its foliage and flowers so rich and luxuriant, so different from a garden in Europe—rose up before them, and that shady nook which had been Gabrielle's especially, where she had planted what she chose, and watched the growth of her favourite flowers. And then they would stretch forth beyond the house limits, and in the cool of the evening, or perhaps in the early morning, before the sun was dangerous, would wander along by the sea-shore, or through the woods, where the verdure was on so wonderful a scale, and where the strange birds, that are caged as curiosities here and made much of, sung almost unheeded.

And they would talk of Gilbert too. As a little boy he had learnt his first lessons of this worthy lady, before the tutor came to teach the boys. They talked of his quickness and cleverness, and how he and Gabrielle had always been such friends and comrades, and how they had seemed to be intended for each other from the very first. And then—O, then some cruel reality would dissipate in a moment these visions of the past, in which they had been so absorbed that the present was forgotten. Some incident of gaol life would recall them in a moment to a consciousness of the real state of things—thrust it before them in all its horror; and the old lady would remember that this her dear little pupil was shut up in the prison of Newgate, accused of a capital offence, and awaiting her trial; and the pupil herself would think of this too at the same moment, and bitter tears would fill the eyes of both.

But there were times when no visitors were admitted; long seasons of utter inaction, when weary thoughts, and thoughts that were even terrible, were by no means to be evaded. The days were short at this season, and the period of time during which darkness covered the earth was terribly and, as it seemed, disproportion-

ately long. The evenings too were endless; and though Gabrielle was allowed to have light and to read, it yet appeared as if the time would never pass. There is something depressing to the animal spirits in reading overlong; and besides, our unhappy prisoner could not always fix her attention upon what she read. The awful life of suspense which she was leading made her at times restless, and incapable of fixing herself to any occupation.

And then the nights. Was there any end to these? To Gabrielle they appeared to be interminable. Her sleep was fitful, a sort of wretched unrefreshing doze, and even this continually interrupted, and every such snatch of repose followed by a long period of wakefulness. Her cell was dimly lighted; and many were the dreary hours which she passed gazing at the uninteresting objects and forms which the obscure light revealed, and with which she was already familiar even to disgust. She formed the shadows on the wall into spectres. The active imagination turned all sorts of well-known objects into shapes which frightened her, and yet she must needs look on. The quietness appalled her. The interior of the gaol was as still at night as the very grave



itself, and she longed with a longing that cannot be told for the morning noises and the morning light. It was a weary time.

And what sleep she got was it not troubled with terrible and unhallowed dreams?—dreams more or less tinctured with the disquietude of her waking thoughts. Sometimes she dreamed of days not long gone by. Happy days they were, though they had hardly appeared so at the time. They had been—she and her husband—so straitened lately as to means, that they had got to dwell on the subject of poverty too exclusively, and to think it almost the only evil that existed. The poverty never reappeared in her dreams, but only the happiness of those days when she and Gilbert were at least together. Poverty! what was a poverty, that they both shared, to this?

One night, her dreams abandoning the past stretched on to what was to come. It was at a time the most critical that could well be conceived that she thus dreamed; for on the very next day her trial was to begin. All day long that one thought had been before her. She had had only a short interview with Gilbert, but every moment of it had been occupied with talk about the trial and what he intended

to do with the defence. He had appeared very sanguine to her, though secretly, in his inmost heart, he was at that time but ill at ease. Again she had been visited by her old governess, and then the talk had still been about the coming trial. Gabrielle had thought of it incessantly as she lay wakeful in her bed; and when at last she fell into a sort of uneasy slumber, it influenced even her sleeping thoughts. It was the trial which lay before her, and which occupied her mind so continually during her waking hours, that came to trouble her now.

It was a very different thing though to any thing she had ever pictured to herself at other times; for the vast hall in which it took place was almost empty and very dark. Only light enough to see that the judge by whom she was to be tried was—horror of horrors—Jane Cantanker! Jane Cantanker turned into an old man—there was a ghastly thing too—yet Jane Cantanker herself. There was no other judge, no jury, no spectators, except one who sat at the farthest end of the hall, eating at a table covered with a white cloth. He was a perplexing person this, and had no settled identity, but kept on changing. Now he

was the chaplain of the gaol, and now again he was Julius Lethwaite. At one time he would be that Dr. Giles, surgeon to the police, who was called in when Miss Carrington died, and at another he would wear the appearance of a clown—a stage-clown, painted white and red, and very terrible to behold. Even in a dream it seemed something inconsistent that he should go on eating in a court of justice; and it seemed odd also that the table at which he ate, and over which the white cloth was spread, should be in shape like a coffin.

Gilbert was there, and she knew that he was to plead for her defence. O, she was sensible enough about that! There were no other barristers present though, and no court officials. The whole trial was in the hands of Gilbert and the judge; for the man who sat in the corner eating took no part in it at all. He never left off eating, except to stare with wan eyes at her, and slowly to draw his knife across his throat in dumb-show, intimating to her that she need not hope for mercy. Horrible action, taking into consideration the look of the man, and his surroundings, and the fact of his being the only person present. But it was all horrible; and most horrible of all was



the silence in which the whole trial was conducted. The judge did not speak; and as for Gilbert, he made no attempt to defend her. He sat with his arms folded, leaning back in his seat, and with a sort of sarcastic smile upon his face. Even when the witnesses began to appear, they never spoke. They came up one by one and denounced her in dumb-show. They pointed at her. They made horrible grimaces, and shook their heads at her, but they did not speak. Nor did any one of them ever retire. They came up one by one, till at last they were all assembled in array against her. There they stood grinning and mouthing and pointing at her. In the place into which they were penned there was not room for them all to stand abreast, and so those behind were fain to leap up and down in a sort of monotonous dance, in order that they might show themselves above the heads of those in the front rank, and might, like them, denounce her by their gestures. Among them all—those that stood pointing silently in front and those who leapt and danced behind—there was no single face that she knew, except one. There was one of these witnesses who remained quite quiet in a shadowy corner, and never

moved or ceased to gaze upon her. Why, it was Jane Cantanker again! The judge was gone, and there was she, who had been the judge, penned in among the witnesses—the silent witnesses against her; and still her husband did nothing to help her, only sat by and smiled.

And she herself—she who was undergoing this horrible ordeal—what could *she* do? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Totally tonguetied, and paralysed. Terror—the terror that we know in dreams—was upon her; but she could not cry out for help, nor even appeal to Gilbert to entreat him not to sit there and smile, but to come and help her—help her, above all things, against those dreadful witnesses who mouthed and pointed at her.

But she was convicted. In a moment—she knew not how or by whom, but she knew it—she was doomed, and they were all against her; and there sat her husband, her own Gilbert, unmoved, with folded arms, and still with that dreadful smile. Will he never stir? He does not even look at her. He sits and smiles, even now, when she has been convicted—now when she is to die, when all the witnesses in two rows, one above the other,

are pointing at her—now even when the man, who was eating—what is he doing? He is kneeling on one knee, surely, on the coffin-table—and he has got a gun, and is taking aim at her. There is no escape; the gun follows her, the muzzle is pointed at her. If she throws herself down, the gun is lowered. If she springs up, it is raised. It is always pointed at her. And now she is still, she cannot move for fear. She cannot move nor scream for help. The aim is steady now—and now—he fires!

Gabrielle started up with a scream, awakened in a moment by the crash. The noise was a real noise. It was caused by the sudden drawing back of the bolt outside her door; but the poor dreamer could at first neither understand this nor any thing else. She was all in her dream. It had been so true, so terrible, that for the time it was actually stronger than fact. The dream was the real thing, and what was now going on around her was the vision.

By degrees realities began to assert themselves once more, and she knew that she had dreamed. That was the first symptom of returning consciousness. Then came a dreadful

thought; this was the day of her trial. She did not wake, as the reader does, from a fearful dream, finding that he is in his own home, and that it was all fancy—she did not wake thus. It was not all fancy, for this was the day of her trial, and O, if that dream should be ominous!

Still half-bewildered, Gabrielle at last becomes conscious that there is some one speaking to her. It is a female turnkey, who entered when that bolt, whose loud report came so aptly into Gabrielle's dream, was withdrawn. The woman holds a note in her hand, and solicits Gabrielle's attention to it. She sees her husband's handwriting, and is broad awake in a moment. The note runs thus:

“A new witness has turned up at the last moment. He has been in the habit of selling laudanum to the late Miss Carrington. His evidence changes all. Hope, dearest, hope for every thing good, as I firmly believe you may.  
Your GILBERT.”

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SCENT IMPROVES.

It becomes necessary now that the reader should be informed how that hasty note which was mentioned in the last chapter came to be written. In order to do this, the reader must consent to follow once more for a brief space the fortunes of Mr. Julius Lethwaite and his faithful follower and ally, Jonathan Goodrich. These two made all possible despatch on the road to Cornelius Vampi's place of abode. There was, indeed, every reason for haste. It was the night before the trial. Whatever had to be done, must be done promptly. Then there was the stimulant of hope to urge them on and keep them from flagging. There really did seem now to be reasonable ground for hope—hope that this terrible mystery might be at last cleared up. That discovery of the bottle had altered every thing. To Julius Lethwaite, too, the mere fact of being

employed in an attempt to serve his friends at such a crisis was a source of high gratification, and would have been so even if the prospect had been less encouraging than it now undoubtedly was.

For all the hurry of the moment, our friend did not neglect so fine an opportunity of analysing motive. "Ah," he thought to himself, as he and the old clerk hurried along the streets, now somewhat deserted, "some people would think that I was acting out of pure philanthropy and love of my friends. I know better. It is the love of excitement to begin with, and the desire of having a finger in the pie, that are urging me on. Nothing else, I am convinced. Excitement! Why, it's like hunting down game to be on a track like this, and following out the scent as we are doing now. Half the actions that are called good in this world might be traced to those two motives, — love of excitement, and the desire to have a finger in the pie."

Jonathan Goodrich was in his turn occupied, as his master was, with his own reflections. He was no friend to the art mystic, and he had vague doubts as to the propriety of having any thing to do with one so devoted

to its culture as Cornelius Vampi. As a soothsayer he had no belief in Vampi at all. He looked upon his studies of the heavenly bodies, and his habitual endeavours to gain from them an insight into the remote future, with feelings that oscillated between contempt and horror. It was either a total mistake from beginning to end, or else, if there was any thing in it, it was a practising of the occult arts, a tampering with witchcraft and necromancy, and, as such, an abomination in the eyes of all persons of well-regulated mind.

Lethwaite, who always gave the old man an opportunity of expressing his opinion, and, indeed, had a great value for it, invited him—now that he had finally settled that question of the motive by which he himself was at this time influenced—to say what he thought of the step they were now taking.

“Well, sir,” replied the old fellow, always pleased to hold forth a little, “I’ve no opinion, as you’re well aware, of Mr. Vampi’s fortune-telling, and predicting, and that sort of thing, because in the first place, according to what you yourself have told me, for once that he’s been right, he’s been at least twenty times wrong; and because in the second place, if he

could foretell the future, it must be by some hocus-pocus which it doesn't become me to speak of, and which would be much better left alone. At the same time, setting all these pretensions on one side, and regarding him as a man with a right to an opinion like any one else, I've nothing to say against him; and if you think, sir, that his opinion in this case might be worth having, and might help in any way to bring this poor lady out of trouble, why, all I say sir, is—in Heaven's name let's have it."

Mr. Lethwaite was no doubt highly edified with this oracular utterance; but he made no remark, and Jonathan went on.


"At the same time, there is one suggestion which I would venture to make if you'll allow me, and that is that you'll say nothing to Mr. Vampi about this discovery which we've just made, nor give him any hint or clue to go by. I think, sir, according to my poor judgment, that it will be best not to tell him any thing till he's first told *us* what he knows, and that it would be better that you should approach the subject in some roundabout way; and then, if what he says corresponds with what we know, it will be altogether more satisfactory to all parties afterwards."



Lethwaite reflected a little on what the old man had said, and agreed to act upon his advice. This colloquy brought them to the philosopher's door.

Cornelius Vampi was upstairs in his laboratory, and occupied with that particular branch of hocus-pocus—as the old clerk called it—which had to do with the production of the “elixir.” His client had become more and more thirsty for this rejuvenising draught with every instalment which he had handed her; indeed, it was as much as he could do to keep pace with her appetite. Like old “Smagg,” she had her seasons of doubt and her seasons of confidence, and our philosopher got the full benefit of both these moods. If a candid friend told her one day that she looked her age, the elixir and its composer came in for some very hard words; while if, on another occasion, some flatterer assured her that she got younger every day, she had sweet words and soft smiles for both the philosopher and his mixture for some time to come.

The philosopher was always glad to see Julius Lethwaite; and just now he was particularly so, being, for him, in rather a desponding frame of mind.



"I think it must be the moon," he said, after complaining to his visitor of the condition of his animal spirits. "She's near the full, and I've always observed that at such times my mind is very much affected. I don't sleep so well, and am more excited than I could wish. I don't think we attribute half influence enough to the moon."

"Good heavens, what nonsense!" said Jonathan Goodrich to himself. "The moon, indeed!"

"The poet Shakespeare," continued Cornelius, "who knew what he was about too well to doubt the planetary influences which work upon us, ascribes even the commission of deeds of violence to the moon's power. 'It is,' says he, 'the very error of the moon. She comes more near the earth than she was wont, and makes men mad.'"

"I have myself fancied at times," observed Lethwaite reflectively, "that I have been subjected to lunar influences."

Poor old Goodrich uttered a low groan at this, and cast up his eyes to heaven.

"'Influences,'" repeated Vampi, taking no notice of the old man's ejaculation,—"'influences!' Why, it is a thing there can

be no doubt about. Whence otherwise such words as moonstruck, lunatic, lunacy? I'll tell you what, sir, there's something awful about the thought of that pale ghastly luminary hanging there in space, a great chaos of uninhabited mountains and valleys and exhausted volcanoes and empty craters. It's my belief, sir, that it's the ghost of a dead world; and it's my advice to you to give it a wide berth, as you would any other ghost, and to keep out of the reach of its rays as much as ever you can."

"I believe you're right," said Lethwaite musingly.

"There's my poor master infected now," thought Jonathan. "Mercy on us, what a pack of nonsense they talk!"

"I wonder," resumed Lethwaite, in the same speculative tone, "if the moon has had any thing to do with the complication of troubles and disasters which have fallen on my poor friends Gilbert and Gabrielle Penmore?"

The philosopher turned round from the stove before which he was seated at the sound of that name, and gazed at his visitor for some seconds in silence.

"Penmore!" he said at last; "'Gabrielle

Penmore! Why, that was the name spoken of by that poor deranged creature."

"What 'poor deranged creature'?" asked Lethwaite eagerly.

"A woman who came here one day to ask me to work out a spell against some person of the name you have mentioned."

"Against Gabrielle Penmore?" asked Julius again.

"The same," replied the astrologer. "I met her subsequently by chance in the Old Bailey late at night. She said then that she had done without the spell which I had refused to give her. Her enemy was there, she said, in the prison; and she actually seemed to caress the very walls of Newgate."

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated Lethwaite, "how extraordinary is the mixed malignancy and fidelity of that woman!"

"Is she not mad, then?" asked Vampi.

"No more than you or I," was the answer.

"Then you know who she is?" asked Cornelius.

"I do not *know*; I can only guess. But putting together her desiring a curse on the name of Gabrielle Penmore and her subse-

quent assertion that the person who bore that name was shut up in Newgate, I can only conclude that it must be Jane Cantanker. Can you describe her?"

"A woman of about fifty years of age, tall of stature, and thin, with very black hair, and dark fiery eyes. When not talking, her mouth was kept firmly shut, and she breathed by the nostrils only." Cornelius was a great observer.

"The description corresponds closely enough," said Lethwaite, after reflecting for a moment. "It must have been Jane Cantanker herself."

"And who is she?" asked the philosopher. "Who is Jane Cantanker?"

Mr. Lethwaite and the old clerk exchanged a glance of intelligence.

"The answer to that question," said the former, "involves us in rather a long story." With that he proceeded to relate a great part of those particulars with which the reader is already acquainted, dwelling at some length upon that part of the narrative which bore upon the circumstances of Miss Carrington's death and the extraordinary mystery which hung over it.

Throughout the whole of the latter part of the narrative, but more especially from the moment that mention was made of the nature of the poison which had been found in the body of the deceased lady, and to which her death was attributed, Lethwaite could not help being struck by the extraordinary interest manifested by the astrologer in every word that was spoken, and the almost breathless emotion with which he listened. Two or three times, indeed, he seemed on the point of interrupting the narrative with some question or remark ; but he stopped himself, if indeed this was really the case, and allowed the story to reach its termination before he spoke.

Even then he paused yet awhile, and seemed to be running over what he had just heard in his mind, and comparing these facts with some that dwelt in his own mind. At last he said, very thoughtfully and with an uncommon gravity,

“I cannot say certainly yet—and till I know more ; but it appears to me that it is possible that I may be able to throw some light upon this extraordinary tale.”

Lethwaite remained speechless for a moment in sheer amazement.

"In Heaven's name," he said at last,—“in Heaven's name, Cornelius, consider what you are saying.”

“I do consider,” replied the philosopher; “and it is because I do so that I speak, as you hear, with diffidence and mistrust. The reasons I have for thinking that it is possible that I may be possessed of information bearing on this case you shall hear and judge of yourself.”

“Quick, quick!” said Lethwaite; and the astrologer went on.

“Do you remember that a short time since I was in the habit of receiving visits from time to time from a strange lady?”

“I remember it perfectly.”

“And you used to joke me, if you remember, about the regularity of her visits, and the mystery which always attended them?”

“I remember every word we said about her.”

“Well, now listen. Suddenly that lady's visits ceased, and that at a time when she had actually made an appointment with me for a future day—the day but one, in fact, after I last saw her.”

“But what has this to do,” cried Leth-

waite, "with what I was telling you? why should you imagine that this lady or her visits has any thing to do with my story?"

"Because," replied Vampi, "the object she had in coming to me was to obtain supplies of LAUDANUM!"

"'Laudanum!'" echoed Lethwaite; and the old clerk took up the word, and repeated it in a fainter key.

"Yes—laudanum. Now you see why I thought that I might know something of importance to the issue of this case."

"But her name—what was the name of this lady?"

"That is what I never could find out," replied the philosopher.

An exclamation of bitter disappointment escaped from Lethwaite as he heard this discouraging announcement. It seemed fatal to his hopes. There was a silence of some duration. It was broken by Cornelius.

"What was the date of the lady's death by poison?" he asked hastily.

"The twenty-seventh of January," was the reply.

Cornelius Vampi rose from the place where he had been sitting and repaired to a large



business-like-looking desk which stood at the other end of the room. Opening this piece of furniture, he took out a small book, such as memorandums and appointments are kept in, and referred to one of its pages.

"Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, clapping the book to and throwing it down on the desk.

"What is it?" cried Lethwaite; "what have you discovered?"

"It was on the twenty-sixth that she was here for the last time, and it was on the twenty-eighth that she was to have returned on her own appointment; an appointment which she has never kept."

Again there was silence. The three men looked at each other in dumb consternation.

"It must have been the same," said Lethwaite at last; "but how will it be possible to set the question at rest?"

"The body," said Cornelius,— "is it buried?"

"Some days ago," was the answer.

Cornelius reflected for a time. "There was a bag or reticule," he said, "which she used to bring with her, which I could identify."

"Could you with certainty?"

"Yes, there was a crest engraved on the metal of the snap—it was a half-lion rampant, holding a sword in one of its paws."

"That is something," said Lethwaite eagerly, rising as he spoke. "That must be inquired after at once. Stay," he added suddenly, as if influenced by a sudden inspiration; "you remember her face?"

"Perfectly. She was ordinarily closely veiled, but once I asked her to unveil herself, and she did so. I remember the face very well. I saw it on another occasion as well, now I come to remember."

"Come with me," cried Lethwaite, unable longer to restrain himself; "come with me at once. We must settle this question without a moment's delay."


Vampi was nothing loth, and in a few seconds the three men were out in the night-air, and on their way to Beaumont Street.

It was Gilbert Penmore himself who in the early morning left in charge of the night-watchman that note which Gabrielle only received when the time came for awakening the prisoners.

## CHAPTER XII.

### AT THE BAR.

AND now the day had arrived on which the trial of Gabrielle Penmore for the wilful murder of Diana Carrington was to begin. Whether the inquiry would terminate on this same day of its commencement was a doubtful matter; and those who knew best about such things, and had had most experience, were decidedly of opinion that it would not. There was great bustle about the court and its environs, and the number of persons got together to witness the issue of this important and interesting case was very great. The newspapers next morning had a great deal to say about the distinguished company assembled: "We observed the following persons of note occupying conspicuous positions in the body of the court." And then followed a long list of names and titles.



Such a case as this, it will easily be credited, could not fail to draw together a great crowd of persons, anxious not only to watch the course of the trial and to hear the verdict, but to see this lady who, young in years, well connected by birth, of such attractive appearance and gentle bearing, was yet accused (incredible as it seemed) of that crime which the law has placed at the head of the list, as the worst of atrocities, and to the commission of which the punishment of death is still awarded.

Nor was this all. It had now got to be generally known that this young lady was to be defended on her trial by no less a person than her own husband. Yes; the barrister who was bound to watch the interests of his client with breathless care, to parry every thrust that should be made against her life,—for it would be her life, and nothing less, that would be at stake,—to defend her inch by inch, and step by step,—this champion of her rights, this defender of her person, was the same who had plighted his troth to her at the altar, and sworn to love, honour, and protect her as long as he should live.

Could a more wondrous combination of

things—could any thing more calculated to stimulate men's curiosity—be conceived? Was it possible that a more enormous stake could be hazarded, a more tremendous issue hang in the balance? Throughout, the case had always excited the most powerful interest. The coroner's inquest, the application for the magistrate's warrant,—every stage through which the thing had passed, had stirred the public curiosity strangely. The newspapers had been full of the case; it had been the talk of the clubs, and even of the drawing-rooms; for ladies were interested in the history of this young creature who was involved in so fearful a danger, and over whom there hung so dark and profound a shadow. People could not believe it that that gentle, delicate-looking girl, with the refined sensitive face, whom some had seen in person, while others were familiar with her features from the photographs in the shop-windows, could have been guilty of this foul and hideous crime,—a crime, too, rendered doubly foul and doubly hideous by the treachery which accompanied it. Society had to some extent taken the case up. Society did not know her exactly, but it knew *about* her; while about her husband and his


family it was even better informed yet. There were old fellows who had been contemporaries of his father, and who would revive their recollections for the occasion. "Penmore,—O yes, I knew Penmore well enough; and an uncommon fine young fellow he was too. We were both in the 28th together. Ah, dear, yes; he suffered a good deal at the time when the great depreciation in West-Indian property took place. And then they gave him that appointment, and one saw no more of him. Poor fellow! and so this Mrs. Penmore that there's all this fuss about is his son's wife. God bless my soul, what a dreadful thing!"

It was at a London dinner-table that these reminiscences were elicited from a certain veteran colonel, an old retired officer, who had once, as he said, served with Governor Penmore, then a subaltern in a marching regiment. People who could call up such memories as these were at this time very welcome in general society; while any one who had actually known or come in contact with Gilbert Penmore or his wife personally, was quite eagerly sought after. As for Julius Lethwaite, his friends were ready to tear him to pieces from the moment that it became

known that the heroine in this terrible drama was numbered among his friends, and that her husband was his constant associate.

Even his descent in the social scale from being a rich merchant, and a sleeping partner with nothing to do, to occupying the post of artist on the drums in the orchestra of a theatre, could not deprive of his social importance the man who was actually the companion of the two persons about whom society was at that moment so keenly interested; and Lethwaite might have dined out every day of his life on the strength of his friendship for the suspected murderess and her husband-advocate, if his professional engagements would have permitted it, and if the state of his spirits, much depressed by his friend's misfortunes, had not wholly unfitted him for the gossip of the drawing-rooms.

It was a crowded court. Every available inch of ground was utilised, and the space usually set aside for official purposes was encroached upon to the very utmost. Even the members of the public press were scarcely allowed elbow-room; and, accustomed as they were to niche themselves into corners, were apt to complain of the want of accommodation.



These gentlemen were, as usual, busy already before the work of the day began. Some were gleaning information from lawyers of their acquaintance; some were extracting interesting particulars from officials connected with the prison; some were laying their heads together, imparting their information mutually to each other; while some old stagers were making themselves comfortable, getting their pens and ink ready, and seating themselves in such wise as that they could see, hear, and write with the greatest convenience. They had their work cut out for them. This trial was an important one, and the public would be jealously on the look-out for closely observed details and accurate description of every thing that happened. The "*on dits*" that were in circulation in connection with this case were on a most extended scale, and had to be scrupulously canvassed by the gentlemen of the press before it could be thought right to give them admission to the honours of print.

"Is it true," the *Evening Gun* would ask, addressing himself to a neighbour, "that a very high personage sent down to the prison to say that the very best counsel that was to



be had should be provided free of expense, if the accused wished to avail herself of it?"

"Not a word of truth in it."

"It was hinted in the 'Reliable Rumours' column of the *Vigil*," retorted the first speaker.

"Then you may be sure it isn't true. Their plan is a simple one. They invent a thing, and publish it in large type one day, and contradict it in small print the next. And a very good plan too."

"I'll tell you what is true, though, and no mistake," remarked the *Evening Gun* again, "and that is, that the different flower-shop people in Covent Garden have clubbed together to keep the prisoner supplied with bouquets ever since the day of the inquest."

"You don't say so!" remarked the reporter of the *Early Bird*, note-book in hand.

"I do indeed. You may rely on it perfectly, just as you may on the fact that the Lady Violet Ammonia has sent her a magnificent golden smelling-bottle, set with rubies, and full of the most pungent salts that could be got, expressly for the trial."

"You don't say so!" urged the *Early Bird* again.

"Yes, but I do. You'll see it at the trial."

The bar had its gossip and its talk in connection with the great case, as the reporters had.

"No change about the defence, I suppose?" asked a gentleman, whose black eyebrows and whiskers formed a striking contrast to his white wig and pale face, and who leant over as he spoke to secure the attention of one of the attorneys in court; no other, indeed, than our friend Mr. Craft.

"No, I believe not. He's determined that nobody shall get her off but himself."

"Is it true that Vellumy offered to defend her?"

"Yes; I had it from himself; but Penmore declined him very courteously, and said that his wife was still determined to trust to her husband and to nobody else."

"And is he sanguine about it, do you know?"

"Very, I'm told. I understand that some new evidence has turned up at the eleventh hour; evidence of the most vital importance, and which can't fail to affect the case materially."

"Did you hear what it was?"

"No, but we shall know before long now."

All this time the commotion and noise in court were very great. It was more than full; and except the places which were kept for those who held office, there was not a vacant square foot to be seen any where. The buzz and confusion was at its height; every body seemed to be talking at once, and all in a high state of excitement, when in one moment there came a sudden lull, and all eyes were turned in one direction, to where the figure of a pale young man with rather a yellow face, and wearing a wig and gown, was seen advancing slowly and with difficulty towards the place reserved for him on the barristers' benches.

The public might well gaze after this gentleman, for the rumour which went through the court like an electric flash that he was the "counsel for the defence," was nothing more or less than the truth.

Our friend Gilbert moved and looked almost like one in a trance; and I think it is probable that he was wrought up to such a high pitch of nervous excitation, that the court and the people, and all things around, would appear but indistinctly before him—dim, and uncertain, and wavering.

He was very, very pale, but hardly ner-

vous, and not embarrassed at all. Embarrassment is for small occasions, not for such moments as these. A man may be embarrassed when he returns thanks for the drinking of his health, not when he pleads for the life of one whom he loves.

Penmore took his place, holding such papers as he required in his hand. There was no fussy turning over of briefs or conversation with attorneys; no referring to law-books. All that was done long ago. Such actions are often resorted to by persons who feel that all eyes are fixed upon their movements. If all eyes were fixed upon Gilbert Penmore, he did not know it, or knowing was entirely indifferent. He was here in the lists. His dear Gabrielle was in danger, and he was to fight for her. Let those look on who liked. They were invisible to him.

There was a gentleman in a very old gown, and a wig that fitted him ill, who was seated next to Gilbert, and who was evidently engaged in the case. It was his friend and colleague, Mr. Steel.

These two spoke together now and then in whispers, but for the most part they were very silent.

The court was full. Nay, more, the very purlieus of the court were encumbered with those who, unable to gain admittance themselves, drew their supplies of information from those who were more fortunate; receiving notice of every thing that happened from persons within, and in turn passing it on to those who were yet farther off from the great centre of attraction.

"He's come in," one of these retailers of second-hand information would exclaim upon the entry of Penmore as just described.

"He's come in, Bill."

"Who's come in?" inquired the person thus addressed.

"'Er 'usband," was the answer.

"'Ow does he look?"

"Hoffle pale."

And so the arrival of each new actor in this terrible drama was proclaimed, and his or her appearance commented on.

For all things were now ready. The members of the bar were seated, the reporters were ready with their pencils in their hands, and their paper fastened down with elastic bands. The gentlemen of the weekly press, whose business was less to report the trial than to note

the peculiarities of the scene and to record it in its more popular and picturesque aspect, were ready with their note-books, as the artists with their sketch-books. The ushers were in their places, ready to enforce silence.

In another moment it was proclaimed aloud, and a small door on the dais at the upper end of the hall being opened, the judges came into court.

There were two of them. One—it was he who entered first—was a very old man of a most noble and worshipful appearance, such as one seldom sees. He was of somewhat tall stature, and inclining to be thin; but his figure was still good, and his judge's robes fell gracefully and nobly about him. His face was very pale and full of lines, which seemed all to tell of thoughtfulness and gravity. The features were as entirely delicate in formation as they could be without incurring any charge of effeminacy, from which indeed they were entirely free, as they were from all approach to weakness; indeed, the under-jaw was remarkably prominent, and with the keen piercing eyes, made the face to be one full of magnificent power. It was a countenance which had been long in arriving at so much of perfectness. It had

taken upwards of seventy years to build it up to what it was now. The office of a judge is, perhaps, the most God-like function which man has to fulfil upon this earth; and this one was just the *beau idéal* of what a judge should be.

His companion on the bench was a gentleman in the very prime of life, who had reached this high position at a much earlier period than is at all usual, by the exercise of rare abilities combined with indefatigable industry and perseverance.

The old judge and the young judge sat side by side; and there was that in their appearance which gave a sure guarantee that entire justice should be done to any who might come that day before them. They had only just taken their seats, and the hum of conversation caused by their entrance had only just subsided, when a new sensation seemed to run as by one consent through the whole vast assembly, and all eyes turning simultaneously in one direction, saw that a certain space which had hitherto remained vacant in that crowded court was filled up, and that the prisoner was placed at the bar.

They put a chair for her in the dock; and this indeed was necessary, for her knees trem-

bled so under her that it would have been impossible for her to stand. She sat there quite quietly, with her hands joined together and lying in her lap, and her head bent forwards. There was not much to gratify public curiosity. She wore her usual quiet outdoor costume, and her veil was drawn down over her face. But it was a pathetic little figure in that big place, and with such an array drawn out against her. It was a terrible ordeal; and to have all those eyes fixed on her was alone enough to have daunted a stronger woman than this. But this was not all. Those eyes were fixed upon her because she was the central figure of a drama of surpassing and dreadful interest—because her young life was in danger, and hung upon the issue of the investigation which was now beginning. The reader must not blame this woman for *being* a woman, nor think the worse of her because she does not come forward boldly to assert her innocence by looking her accusers and the world in general proudly in the face. When the trial actually commenced, Gabrielle tried to stand; but it was entirely impossible at present, and she was compelled to seat herself again just as she was before. Once she raised her head; it was to look for her



husband's face, but she could not make him out in the crowd of barristers, and was obliged to give it up. She had seen, however, in that brief glance the figure of the old judge, and had observed that his countenance as he looked on her was full of concern and pity; and from that moment she felt a greater degree of calmness and a strange feeling of support and hope.

It is probable that on this great and terrible occasion all that took place was to her dim and unreal; that much passed which escaped her altogether; and that there was a strange indistinctness about what she saw and what she heard. The *habitués* of the Old Bailey eat and sleep pretty tolerably when their lives are in danger; but this poor lady had not been able to do either, and she was miserably weak and exhausted. The *habitués* too are calm and collected when on their trials. It was not so with Gabrielle. Even the horrible words of the indictment, as the officer of the court read them out, lost some of their terror to her by reason of this semi-stupor which was upon her. She hardly heard the accusation that she did, on a certain day in January last, kill and slay one Diana Carrington by administering to her a certain poisonous drug called

laudanum in sufficient quantity to destroy life ; or having heard, realised but faintly what the accusation meant.

And now the jurymen have settled themselves in their places as men do who are powerfully interested in the scene before them. There is the customary amount of whispering going on among them. There is the usual obstinate and thick-headed-looking individual there who is never absent, any more than the fussy man who sees a great many things which escape other people, and which indeed have no existence except in his own imagination. He is the same man who takes notes so ostentatiously, and who asks questions simply for the sake of showing his own cleverness.

And now the counsel for the prosecution got up in his place, and proceeded to draw the attention of these men to his view of the facts of the case. He was a shrewd careful man, and seemed disposed to make the very most of the terribly strong evidence at his disposal. "I find," he said, after a few preliminary words in which he adverted to the great peculiarity of the case, and entreated the jury not to let any feeling of interest in the prisoner or sympathy for her terrible and almost unexampled

position affect them in their opinion as to her guilt or innocence,—“I find,” said this gentleman, after speaking for a considerable time on the nature of the case, “that on a certain day at the end of last autumn the deceased lady, Miss Carrington, came to reside at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Penmore, the former of whom was her first cousin once removed. The persons thus brought together do not appear to have lived on very happy terms. Into the merits of the case on either side it is not necessary or desirable that I should enter. Be these what they may, certain it is that there was some amount of ill-feeling between Miss Carrington and the prisoner; that it broke out from time to time; and that on one occasion more particularly it amounted to a serious disagreement. That disagreement was followed by the sudden and unexpected death of Miss Carrington under circumstances of something more than a suspicious kind. I shall be able to prove, by the testimony of the witnesses who will presently be examined before you, that the prisoner had on the evening of the day on which that disagreement, to which I have alluded, took place, an opportunity of supplying Miss Carrington with meat and

drink ; that she had also an opportunity of introducing into such meat and drink any foreign matter with which she might desire to qualify it ; and that in the course of the night on which Miss Carrington partook of that refreshment which was conveyed to her by the prisoner, or early on the following morning, Diana Carrington breathed her last—poisoned, as the medical evidence shows, by a drug, a large quantity of which was found in the possession of the prisoner.

Serjeant Probyn then proceeded to call his witnesses, with the view of proving, as the custom is, what he had just been advancing. The first of these was no other than the wretched Charlotte, the servant-of-all-work. She was called to prove the arrival of Miss Carrington at the house in Beaumont Street, and the fact of her residence there, which was done something in this wise. The first few preliminary questions as to her name—which by the bye, was Grimes—her occupation, and the like, having been disposed of, the inquiry followed :

“Do you remember the day of Miss Carrington’s arrival ?”

*Witness.* Yes, sir, I do.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You had many extra things to do, no doubt?

*Witness.* Yes, sir.

*Serjeant Probyn.* When did the lady arrive?

*Witness.* In the evening, sir.

*Serjeant Probyn.* On the evening of the 29th of November?

*Witness.* Yes, sir.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Can you remember any circumstances connected with her arrival?

*Witness.* I was out when she arrived, sir. But I came back afterwards.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And when you came back do you remember any thing of what was going on? Did every thing seem comfortable between Miss Carrington and your mistress?

*Witness.* No, sir. Miss Carrington didn't seem to like any thing that was done for her, and complained a good deal.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And your mistress was naturally enough a little irritated by so many complaints?

*Witness.* No, sir, she wasn't; she took it like a hangel.

[At this unintentional rebuff there was some manifestation in the court of a tendency towards laughter; it was at once suppressed, however.]

*Serjeant Probyn.* Miss Carrington was accompanied by a servant, was she not ?

*Witness.* Yes, sir.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Did she seem as little satisfied as her mistress ?

*Witness.* She was the wust of the two, sir.

It was evidently the object of the Serjeant to prove that from the very first there had been a great amount of provocation inflicted on the unhappy Gabrielle; thus gaining more and more strength of motive for the act of which it was his business to prove her guilty.

“In fact,” said the Serjeant, with that off-hand manner of taking things for granted which is so common among the brotherhood,—“in fact, they both provoked your mistress very much ?”

“They was both very provoking, sir,” replied the witness ; “but my mistress was that gentle and patient, that they couldn’t make it out to quarrel with her.”

“You may stand down,” said Serjeant Probyn. “Call the next witness.” He had got all he could out of this last one ; and the poor faithful drudge had done less for him than he expected.

The next witness was Jane Cantanker.

The greater part of what she had to say is already known to us, and much of it need not be repeated. The whole body of her evidence as eliminated by Serjeant Probyn was certainly of the most damnatory kind, and it was easy to see that it told not a little upon the jury. It was not difficult to gain abundant proof of motive out of this witness. She seemed to remember every word that had ever dropped from Gabrielle's lips which could give the faintest indication of impatient feeling towards her mistress, such as that which arose from Miss Carrington's habit of making known all her wants, connected with the house arrangements, to Mr. rather than to Mrs. Penmore. All that she had overheard of the conversations between the husband and wife, when Miss Carrington was the subject of their talk, was shamelessly reproduced; and every little petulant expression used by Gabrielle—words spoken, some half in fun, some without thinking what they meant—were brought up here in court, and made to wear a serious, even a malignant aspect. She did not care—this terrible and vindictive woman—how her evidence told against herself. She did not care who knew that she had listened at doors to conversations

which she had no right to overhear. Let her but gain this point of bringing the woman whom she believed to be guilty to justice, and mankind might think of her—the instrument of vengeance—as mankind felt disposed. The force of her evidence was terrific; and when she came to speak of that scene with the photograph, in which she pretended that Gabrielle's feelings of jealousy had been so powerfully aroused—when she told of the sad scene at table on that last dreadful day, it was plain to all men that the case for the prosecution wore a terribly strong look. Between her readiness to tell, and the dexterousness with which the counsel for the prosecution drew her information from her, there came at last to be nothing left unsaid, while much that was not said in so many words was artfully suggested.

Some of her evidence was so powerful—seemed so convincing, in the very manner of its coming from her, that a passage here and there may perhaps be worth preserving, in order that the reader may be able to judge what sort of aspect this strange case wore to those who were present in court, as it went on from point to point. Serjeant Probyn had of



course a "learned friend" with him, by whom much of the examining of the witnesses was conducted. Mr. Pry was a middle-aged junior, famed for his powers as an examiner and cross-examiner. He took Jane Cantanker in hand at an early period in her examination-in-chief. His questions, and the answers eliminated by them, were something of this sort :

*Mr. Pry.* You remember, no doubt, the leading incidents of the evening of January 25 ?

*Witness.* Yes, sir ; I remember every thing that took place (pronounced "every think").

*Mr. Pry.* Will you be good enough to tell the jury what happened.

*Witness.* I took my mistress up a cup of tea at about eight o'clock, when she seemed much in her usual health. I asked her permission to step out for a few minutes, which she gave immediate, saying that she would not want any thing of me now till tray-time, as we called it. My mistress never ate any thing with her tea, but had a light supper the last thing at night instead. I left her sitting quite comfortable in her easy-chair, and then I went out to make a few purchases,—some eggs for my mistress's supper, among the rest. I was out about an hour. When I came home I asked the

gurl Charlotte if my mistress's bell had rung ; and hearing that it had not, I did not go up to see after her, but did a bit of mending of my own, and then began to make the necessary preparations for getting ready the tray and that to take upstairs.

*Mr. Pry.* It was not possible that any thing unusual might have got into the food, I suppose ?

*Witness.* O no, sir ; I was always most particular about every thing that was intended for my mistress to eat or drink.

*Mr. Pry.* Just so. You had no laudanum ever in your own possession, had you ?

*Witness.* O dear no, sir ; nothing of the sort.

*Mr. Pry.* You may go on now with what you were telling us, if you please.

*Witness.* I was just finishing the eggs which I had been poaching, when I heard the dining-room door open,—it was but a little house we lived in, and you could hear in one room of it pretty well every thing that took place in any of the others—the door opened, and Mrs. Penmore's footsteps descending the kitchen stairs. It was very unusual for her to come into the kitchen, I will say that ; and I

looked at the gurl Charlotte and she looked at me hard, as much as to say, "I wonder what's up now?"

*Mr. Pry.* You will tell the court what happened next as briefly as possible.

*Witness.* Sir, I wish to be brief, but I thought you were wishful to know all the particulars from the beginning to the hend.

*Mr. Pry.* So we are, no doubt. You were saying—

*Witness.* I was saying that Mrs. Penmore came down the stairs and into the kitchen, and began talking ingratiatory like, as if she'd some favour to ask. And so it seemed she had, for it came out presently that she wanted to be allowed to take my usual office upon her, and carry up my mistress's supper to her room.

At this point there seemed to be a slight movement in court, caused by people turning about to look at each other, with a shake of the head. There was also a whisper exchanged here and there.

*Mr. Pry.* And did you consent to this?

*Witness.* No, sir, I did not. I said I had always been in the habits of taking it up myself, and that I saw no reason for allowing any one else to do so.

*Mr. Pry.* And did the prisoner still continue to urge you?

*Witness.* Yes, sir, she did.

*Mr. Pry.* And was she very pressing about it?

*Witness.* Yes, sir, she was; she went on so, and pressed so hard, even taking the very tray out of my hands, as true as I am here, that I was almost forced to give way at last, which I did, but objecting all the time, and wondering too at her being so anxious about so small a matter; and I stood at the foot of the stairs after she had gone up, half doubting even then whether I wouldn't follow her, and get the tray back again. But I was undecided like for the time, and I stopped where I was. As I stood there at the foot of the stairs, I heard the prisoner—(a word spoken with great relish)—going up, and heard the jingling of the tray also, but it stopped when she got to the first-floor, and then she opened the drawing-room door and went in.

*Mr. Pry.* Was that room on the same floor as the bedroom of the deceased?

*Witness.* No, sir; it was on the floor below it. She stopped in the drawing-room some time, and then—

*Mr. Pry.* How long do you suppose she stopped there ?

*Witness.* Well, sir, it's difficult to say, but I should think three or four minutes. After that I heard her come out, and once more begin ascending the stairs which led to my mistress's room. Then she paused again a little while, and then she tapped at the door and went in. (The witness seemed agitated here, and stopped for breath.)

*Mr. Pry.* After that, I suppose you heard nothing more.

*Witness.* I know nothing more, sir, till the time came when my mistress's bell rung, and I went upstairs to answer it.

*Mr. Pry.* And did you find the prisoner in the room with the deceased ?

*Witness.* Yes, sir ; but she left almost immediately.

*Mr. Pry.* And you remained behind ?

*Witness.* Yes, sir. I remained with my mistress, except for a very short interval, till she went to bed.

*Mr. Pry.* Do you remember any remark she may have made on that evening—any thing in connection with the refreshments of which she had been partaking ?

*Witness.* Yes, sir. She made an allusion to the porter, which, in consequence of previous complaints, I had got at a new public-house. She said that it had a very nasty taste.

*Mr. Pry.* Were those her exact words?

*Witness.* They were, sir, her very words. A "very nasty taste," she says.

*Mr. Pry.* Had you any suspicions, now, at this time?

*Witness.* No, sir; none in the least.

*Mr. Pry.* So little so, that you cleaned the dishes and washed out the jug which had contained the food and drink provided for the deceased lady's supper?

*Witness.* Yes, sir. I washed them up, as I was in the habit of doing, as soon as I brought them downstairs, and while my mistress was preparing for bed.

*Mr. Pry.* How long were you absent from her?

*Witness.* From twenty minutes to half an hour.

*Mr. Pry.* Did you notice any thing remarkable about your mistress?

*Witness.* She seemed very sleepy and drowsy like.

A Jurymen—the same who took the co-

pious notes—here interposed to inquire whether it was ever the case that porter was adulterated with laudanum; but he was met with the objection that such adulteration would scarcely pay, inasmuch as any preparation of opium that could be used for the purpose would be very much more expensive than the best legitimate materials which could be made use of in the manufacture of beer.

The reader will not fail to perceive how close and complete this evidence was. It was terrible to see what a suspicious aspect that act of taking up the deceased lady's supper wore when it came there to be spoken of as a matter of evidence given in a court of justice. Nor was this testimony rendered less terrible by the manner of its delivery. Of the animus entertained by the witness towards the accused there could be no doubt; every time that the word "prisoner" was used a noticeable expression of triumph declaring itself on the witness's countenance.

It was now time for the cross-examination to begin. But for that we shall require a new chapter.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SCALE TURNS THIS WAY AND THAT.

IT has been seen already that Gilbert Penmore had not approached the arduous task which he had set himself without seeking and obtaining such assistance as he felt might really be of use to him. It has already been mentioned that during the time that he had been in the habit of attending court, Gilbert had made some acquaintances among his brethren of the robe. One of these, a man older than Penmore, and of some considerable experience, had volunteered, on first hearing of the projected defence, to assist him in any way in his power; and to him Gilbert had confided the task of cross-examining such witnesses as it might be deemed advisable to subject to that ordeal. So when the examination-in-chief of Jane Cantanker had come to an end, this gen-



tleman—whose name, as the reader perhaps remembers, was Steel—rose in his place, and begging her to remain in the witness-box a few minutes longer, proceeded to ask her certain questions, somewhat to the following purpose:

“You remarked just now,” he said, “that the deceased seemed very drowsy and sleepy when you went upstairs to assist her in going to bed?”

“Yes, sir, I did.”

“Now, will you tell me whether you have not sometimes observed this before?”

The witness hesitated a little here, and seemed inclined to avoid the question.

“Well,” she said at last, “I suppose every body shows a little drowsiness now and then, just at bedtime.”

“Yes, but at other times—*not* at bedtime. Have you not sometimes observed this tendency to drowsiness in your mistress?”

At this question Serjeant Probyn and Mr. Pry were observed to whisper together a good deal. It had just begun to dawn upon them in what direction the defence would turn.

The witness hesitated a good deal in her answers. “N—n—no, she did not know that

she had observed any thing of the sort—nothing out of the way.”

“Nothing out of the way, eh? But still you have observed such a thing now and then.”

“Her mistress was sleepy sometimes,” the witness said; “most people were.”

What can we gather of the nature of evidence as given in court from the reports which appear of the different trials? The manner, nay the look even of a witness is sometimes, as far as the conviction of the jury goes, a form of evidence of the greatest importance; and many decisions which astonish us on paper would surprise us not at all if we had been present in court while the case in question was being tried. The impression left on the minds of those before whom Jane Cantanker spoke was that she was very much understating the truth in her answers. The next question was what the schoolmen call a “crucial” one.

“Have you ever known your mistress take any thing to make her sleepy?”

“I don’t know what you mean, sir.”

“Don’t you? Well, I will put it more plainly then,” said Mr. Steel. “Did you ever

know your mistress to take laudanum, or any other form of opium?"

The witness waited a moment. "No, sir; certainly not," she said, with something of indignation. But Mr. Steel had not done yet.

"Did you ever know your mistress to have laudanum or any other form of opium in her possession?" This question after a suggestion by Gilbert.

Again that pause which invested the answer when it came with so much of insincerity. "I suppose every one has had something of the sort in the house at some time or other."

"Yes, yes, no doubt; but I want to know if your mistress ever had it?"

"She had some once—a little," said the woman sullenly.

"O, 'she had some once.' How did you come to be aware of that fact?"

"I saw some on the chimney-piece in her bed-room when I went to call her one morning."

"And how much may there have been?"

"I can't say certainly. It was a small bottle, and about half full."

"Was your mistress particularly difficult to arouse that morning?"

"She was always rather heavy in the morning. It's some people's nature."

"And on this particular morning she was not especially so?"

"I don't remember. Nothing remarkable, I should say."

"Did your mistress say any thing to you on the subject of the bottle of laudanum?"

"She asked me what I was looking at."

"Did she seem to be displeased that you had observed it?"

"Well — rather — perhaps;" with great hesitation.

"'Rather!' Come, you must know."

"I can't say with certainty." All these answers were given with the most dogged sullenness.

"Why, how long ago was it?"

"O, it may have been a month or six weeks before her death."

"Did your mistress leave the bottle where it was after she had noticed that you had observed it?"

"No."

"What did she do with it, then?"

"She got out of bed and put it away."

"And where did she put it?"

"She thrust it into the bosom of her dressing-gown, as far as I can remember. I left the room soon after, and saw no more of it."

"Now, Jane Cantanker," Mr. Steel resumed, very seriously, "I have one more question to ask you. Is this the only occasion on which you have observed laudanum or any other preparation of opium to be in the possession of the deceased?"

The witness waited some seconds, and then replied :

"Yes, that was the only occasion."

The witness was then told that she might leave the box. She seemed much agitated and not a little exhausted by the length and arduousness of the examination through which she had passed.

The next person examined was the surgeon to the police force, Dr. Giles. He deposed to having been sent for hastily to the house in Beaumont Street. The deceased was quite dead when he arrived; had been so for perhaps two hours, more or less. He directed that the body should be left just as it was till he could return and make a post-mortem

examination, and he especially intimated a wish that nothing should be done that might remove the smell of opium, which was very obvious, from deceased's mouth. That injunction was given, because he thought the presence of such smell was an important indication in the case. When he returned in the afternoon he was accompanied by a friend, and they proceeded at once to investigate the cause of death. He then went into all the medical details of the case, stating at length, and with many technicalities, how he had examined the different organs of the deceased, how they were, on the whole, healthy, though there were indications of such a tendency to unsoundness, or rather weakness, he would say, about the heart as would render the deceased particularly susceptible to the fatal effects of opium, or probably any other narcotic influence. There was nothing there, however, to be the cause of death. The deceased might have lived for years with a heart in that state—but for the opium. That was the cause of death, beyond a doubt. He had examined the stomach very carefully. There were the remains of a meal found in it, and there was, moreover, a certain amount of porter or stout.

In that he had detected unmistakable indications of the presence of opium—he should say in the form of laudanum. There was sufficient to cause death, especially in a person whose heart was in the condition in which he had described the heart of deceased to be. He had no hesitation in stating his firm conviction, founded on considerable professional experience, that in this case the cause of death was the opium which he had found in the body of deceased. He spoke very confidently.

This gentleman's opinion was entirely corroborated by his colleague, who had assisted him in the examination. There was no doubt in his mind either that the deceased lady had died from the effects of poisoning by opium.

The chemist who sold the laudanum to Gabrielle was next placed in the box. He simply repeated what the reader has already heard, mentioning the quantity sold, what it was required for, and the date of the transaction. He, moreover, identified the bottle which was found in Mrs. Penmore's box as one which had come from his establishment.

The evidence of the cause of death was thus made complete. Moreover, the existence of the poison, by which the deceased lady died,

in the possession of the prisoner, was proved; and it had also been shown that abundant opportunity of administering such poison had been afforded to the accused on the night preceding Miss Carrington's death. It remained to strengthen—though, indeed, it hardly appeared necessary—the evidence as to motive. With this view some of the late Miss Carrington's friends—some of those residing at the neighbouring boarding-house—were next called.

Captain Rawlings Scraper was placed in the witness-box, and duly sworn.

*Mr. Pry.* You are a captain in Her Majesty's service?

*Witness.* I am.

*Mr. Pry.* At present on half-pay?

*Witness.* I beg to state that that is also the case.

*Mr. Pry.* You were acquainted with the late Miss Carrington?

*Witness.* Yes, I was. Indeed, I may say that I was well acquainted with her.

*Mr. Pry.* You were doubtless in the habit at different times of conversing with her on a great variety of topics?

*Witness.* O yes, a great variety. In fact, I



may say a great variety. I was, it may be interesting to the court to know, in the habit of giving her advice—which she was good enough to say she valued very highly—on a great many subjects: as to the distribution, or rather the investment, of her property; as to the purchase of such small quantities of wine as she might have need of; or even on matters of a hygienic nature, diet being a subject—

The younger of the two judges on the bench here interposed, and remarked that this evidence was hardly relevant. Mr. Pry took the hint, and brought his man back with all speed.

*Mr. Pry.* I will not trouble you just now, Captain Scaper, to give us your views upon diet, which I have no doubt are valuable enough in themselves. What I wish to ask you is, whether on any occasion you have heard the deceased lady make allusion to any thing unpleasant in connection with the relations which existed between herself and the prisoner?

*Witness.* I really am unable at this moment to recollect.

*Mr. Pry.* Perhaps you will try to tax your memory a little more closely?

*Witness.* I believe I have heard Miss Car-

rington remark that some of the household arrangements in Beaumont Street were not quite to her taste, and that when she had made objection to these, it had led more than once to difference of opinion. Indeed—now I think of it—I have heard Miss Carrington say that when she had alluded in the presence of Mrs. Penmore to some advice which I myself had given to the deceased, it was not well received.

*Mr. Pry.* 'Not well received;' just so—a carping spirit shown, no doubt?

*Witness.* No doubt. I am not able to say with certainty, but no doubt. I am always very cautious how I commit myself to any thing which I have not actually heard with my own ears, having in the course of my long experience of military life, a life in which gossip and—

Mr. Pry, again admonished by the judge, intimated to the captain at this point that the court would not trouble him to relate his military experiences, and was about to suggest his withdrawal from the box, when Mr. Steel for the other side stood up and expressed his wish to ask the witness a question before he left the box.

*Mr. Steel.* Have you ever, Captain Scraper, in the course of your friendly intercourse with the late Miss Carrington, observed any thing remarkable about her—any tendency, for instance, to great changeableness, at one time being sleepy and heavy, and at another unusually excited or irritable?

The captain stated without much circumlocution that he had observed such changes of mood in the course of his acquaintance, and that he had even commented on it to intimate friends.

Miss Preedy, a resident, as it may perhaps be remembered, in the same house with Captain Scraper, fully corroborated the evidence given by that gentleman; and also when under cross-examination bore a similar testimony to the strange variations in the late Miss Carrington's bearing and demeanour at different times. As the evidence was getting to be rather strong on this particular point, this lady was subjected to re-examination when her cross-examination was over. She was re-examined by Serjeant Probyn.

*The Serjeant.* You state that you have observed a great variation of manner in your late friend on certain occasions. Will you be good

enough to inform the court exactly what you mean by that statement?

*Witness.* I hardly know. It is difficult to explain what I mean.

*The Serjeant.* Are you quite sure that you understand what you mean yourself?

*Witness.* I don't know, I'm sure. I think my meaning was that she was a little flighty and odd sometimes. You couldn't depend upon always finding her in the same mood. She would be different at different times.

*The Serjeant.* And will you tell me, Miss Preedy, standing in that solemn position in which you are placed, that you ever knew any one who was *not* different at different times? Really, my lords, I must contend that this is but a desultory and gossiping kind of evidence, and hardly fit in a case of such awful importance to occupy the time of the court or the attention of the jury.

The court ruled, however, that it was legitimate evidence, and that it should be taken for what it was worth. The witness was then permitted to stand down. And now there remained but two more witnesses to be examined to make the case for the prosecution complete. The first of these was the policeman who had

been employed to search the room occupied by the prisoner in the house in Beaumont Street. He was placed in the box immediately, and examined by the junior counsel for the prosecution.

*Mr. Pry.* You were directed, I believe, to search the premises in Beaumont Street, with a view of ascertaining if there were any indications of the poison called laudanum having recently been in the possession of the prisoner?

*Witness.* Yes, sir. Me and another constable of the same division was told off for that duty.

*Mr. Pry.* Will you tell the jury what you discovered?

*Witness.* Well, sir, for a long time we couldn't find what we were in search of. We looked through all the drawers and in the cupboards, and every place we could think of, till at last my mate he caught sight of a box that was stowed away under the bed, and pulling it out and finding it locked, we had to make application for the key; and that being handed over, and every thing taken out of the box,—miscellaneous articles of all kinds,—we found at the bottom of every thing the bottle we were looking for.

*Mr. Pry.* The bottle produced just now in court and identified by the chemist who sold it — *Mr. Cook?*

*Witness.* The same, sir.

*Cross-examined by Mr. Steel.* Were you the constable who went to the shop of *Mr. Cook* to make inquiry as to whether he had sold some laudanum recently to the accused?

*Witness.* Yes, sir, I was.

*Mr. Steel.* Did he say any thing to you as to any caution he had given to the purchaser when he sold the laudanum?

*Witness:* Yes, sir; he said that it was always his custom when he sold such poisonous drugs to caution the parties buying them to keep them out of the way in some place of security.

The other witness to be examined was the solicitor who had been in the habit of attending to Miss Carrington's affairs. He deposed that the deceased lady had died intestate, and that he possessed the draft of a will drawn up in accordance with the wishes of the deceased, by which her property was bequeathed to some distant relations with whom she had formerly resided. That will had never been signed, and was mere waste-paper. The husband of

the prisoner and his brothers and sister were next of kin to the late Miss Carrington; and there being no valid will, her property would be divided among them. It was elicited in cross-examination, however, that the husband of the accused had refused under the circumstances to accept his share of the property, having made it over to the persons named in the invalid will.

This statement seemed to make a considerable sensation in court. The last witness had been examined for the prosecution, doubtless with the view of proving an additional motive for the crime with which Mrs. Penmore was charged in her desire to secure the share in Miss Carrington's property, which would fall to her and her husband should the deceased die intestate. The fact which was elicited in cross-examination caused the evidence of this witness to be, in point of fact, favourable to the defence.

Serjeant Probyn now rose, intimated that he had no more witnesses to examine, and that:

This was the case for the prosecution.

It is hoped that all this time the reader has kept before him two figures, of such pre-eminent interest that the eyes of all persons in

court were continually returning to them throughout the trial. First, that poor little, forlorn, helpless woman sitting in the dock, motionless, with hands joined in her lap, and understanding but faintly much that has been going on; and next, the pale, anxious-looking young advocate in the barristers' quarter, on whom nothing has been lost throughout—no, not so much as a word, and who has sat watching and waiting, eager for the conflict to begin in which he is to fight *à l'outrance* for a life more precious to him than aught else in the world.

The progress of the trial was now suspended for a few minutes to give an opportunity of taking refreshment to those persons who needed it. Among the persons gathered together to watch the issue of this exciting case there was at this time a great buzz of talking. The remarks, which during the progress of the trial could only be made in a hurried, half-intelligible whisper, were now allowed a free vent; and speculations as to the direction which the case was taking abounded on all sides. At this time it seemed to most men that the prospects of the defence looked very bad indeed. The evidence on the other



side was really, as it appeared, overwhelming and impregnable. The line about to be taken by the defence had already been plainly indicated by the nature of the cross-examination to which Jane Cantanker and Captain Scraper had been subjected. The issue of such cross-examination had been, to some extent, favourable to the defence, but a very small advance only had been gained. An hypothesis had been to a certain extent set up, and had to some small extent received support. It had been proved that the deceased lady had once, though some time previous to her death, had laudanum in her possession ; and two witnesses had stated their impression that they had observed certain characteristics about the conduct of the deceased lady which might possibly, but which it was equally possible might *not*, have resulted from the practice of taking opium. If the defence had no more conclusive proof with which to back up their theory than this that had appeared, there would be but little chance for its successful issue.

Such were the speculations with which all persons assembled in the court-house of the Old Bailey on the day whose events we are describing were occupying themselves during

the brief period which had—at this stage of the trial—been allowed to elapse before that second part of it, which was so eagerly anticipated by all that great assembly, commenced.

The interval was a short one, and very soon the usher of the court was once again proclaiming silence, as the judges resumed their seats, and all those officially employed about the place settled themselves anew to their respective functions.

The injunction of the usher was obeyed with a singular alacrity. The hum of talk among the assembled spectators ceased in an instant. The members of the public press, who had been busily employed a moment before in comparing their reports of all that had taken place, helping each other wherever there was any hiatus or doubtful passage, dropped silent into their respective seats; even the lawyers, who had been talking so eagerly among themselves, bandying from one to another the last piece of news, true or otherwise, which was in circulation about this strange cause,—even these gentlemen ceased for the moment to utter so much as a whisper.

There was a great silence in the court as a young man, dressed in the costume of an

advocate, and deadly pale, rose from his seat among the benches assigned to the barristers, and glancing once at some papers which he held in his hand, prepared to address the jury.

At the moment when the young advocate stood up, the prisoner in the dock suffered her head to fall somewhat forwarder on her breast, and her hands, which were folded in her lap, clasped each other more tightly than before.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### GABRIELLE'S CHAMPION.

THE excitement now was very great. There was not an usher—nay, there was not an errand-boy employed about the court who did not know under what extraordinary circumstances the counsel for the defence was to carry that defence through, and what a stake he had depending on its issue. The fact that Gilbert had risen to speak was whispered from one to another of those persons, many in number, who were unable to see all that was going on, till in time it even reached the crowd that was gathered outside. The sharp youth who always takes a prominent part in such an assembly and on such an occasion, and who always has the stupidest of men next to him, caught at the intelligence with avidity.

“He’s on his legs!” said the sharp youth.

“Who is?” inquired his obtuse neighbour.

“Why, ’er ’usband.”

"What's he on his legs for? What's he going to do?"

"Why, to speak for the defence to be sure," said the sharp youth, who was an habitu   of the court, and as well acquainted with all its business and phraseology as a Drury-Lane boy with the technicalities of the stage.

"What I can't make out," said the stupid man, "is what call he has to speak about it."

"Why, stupid," retorted the superior mind, "can't you understand he's the counsel for the defence? He's a defending her."

"Lawyer's wife in trouble," remarked the stupid man; "well, that is a start."

"Ah, I should think it was too," and with that the precocious youth abandoned his friend, and pressed forward in search of more intelligence.

Gilbert Penmore then rose to address the jury, in the midst of a silence which seemed something more than negative. He was deadly pale. For a while things swerved before his eyes, and he spoke at first in a very low key. Perhaps no human being was ever before placed in a position of such severe and intolerable trial.

The counsel for the defence began by making a few preliminary remarks on the peculiar relation in which he stood towards the accused. It was a case in all probability altogether without precedent. He hoped, however, that no one in court would be prejudiced against what he had to say through taking a false view of this that he was doing. "Could I sit by inactive," he said, "and see another risking the life of the accused, by handling her cause in what might appear to me an incomplete or defective manner? Could I bear to see a point neglected that might seem to me a point on which things of infinite importance hinged? Could I bear to see an opportunity missed, or a mistake—even a slight one—made? Suppose that usage is against me, as it may be, is that a thing to consider in a case of life and death? If I had been a physician, and had seen the accused assailed by mortal disease, should I not have sought to come between her and its fatal result? If I had been a soldier, should I not before all other soldiers have interposed to save her from violence? But above all things, if I must needs apologise for this that I am doing, I will say that there is one reason, above and beyond all others, why

I, and I only, should seek to conduct the defence of the accused; and that is that I, and I alone, *know her to be innocent*. This it is that gives to me, who am versed but little in the arts of pleading, an advantage of incalculable value over any one else, however great his natural ability or his acquired experience; this it is that arms me thrice over for the conflict of to-day, and enables me to contend with a force which is the most irresistible of all force—the consciousness of a just and upright cause.”

All eyes were rivetted on the young lawyer; but if any had looked to where the prisoner sat, they might have observed that her head was somewhat raised as these words were spoken, and that something like a smile of heavenly radiance illuminated her features.

“I wish to deal with this case,” continued Gilbert, “as far as may be as a lawyer in the strictest sense of the word, and to prove to the satisfaction of the jury every thing that I advance. I would make no appeal—we thank Heaven there is no need—to the mercy and leniency of those who hear me, but simply and entirely to their sense of justice. Let that sense be kept on the alert throughout this defence, from this moment till the last witness

that I shall call shall have finished the last word of his evidence. Then neither my client nor I will have any thing to fear.

“It has been proved beyond a doubt that the cause of death in the case before the court was poison. This may be admitted at once; and further, that the poison in question was laudanum, or some form of opium, acting on a frame peculiarly predisposed, owing to its organisation, to be influenced by this drug. This being granted, the question which remains to be answered is: By whom was that drug given to the deceased? Three different hypotheses might here be set up as to the person by whom the poison had been administered. There were three different hands by which that poisonous matter might have been conveyed to the lips of the deceased. Indeed, there were but three human beings who *could* have administered the poison. These three persons were, Jane Cantanker, the”—here his voice faltered—“the accused at the bar, and—the deceased lady herself.


“As to the first of these persons,” continued Gilbert, collecting himself by a violent effort, “she has remained from the first unaccused, unsuspected. No one seems to have



thought it possible that suspicion could attach to her. Indeed, the truth is that there is no case against her at all. There would be no motive to induce her to be guilty of such an act. She would have sustained loss instead of gain by her mistress's death. She had no poison in her possession, and every thing has gone to prove her intense affection for her mistress and devotion to her service. Any theory serving to connect her, then, with the poisoning of the deceased may be dismissed at once.


“With regard to the second person to whom it was possible for suspicion to attach in this case, and on whom it has fallen very heavily,—her it will be less easy to clear, though that also shall be done, as I firmly believe, to the satisfaction of all here present.

“And first with regard to the evidence against the accused; there is not one single fact that has been adduced here this day of which I am prepared for one moment to dispute the accuracy. It is all true. The inferences that have been deduced from those facts alone are false. But I will go farther than this, and admit that the circumstantial evidence in this case is damnatory in the extreme,



and points with fearful force, at first sight, to the guilt of the accused. And this evidence is, as I have said, true. I am not going to dispute one point of it from beginning to end, and yet I believe that I shall be able to prove beyond a doubt that it is all compatible with the entire innocence of the accused. It is true, then, as the evidence has shown, that differences between her and the deceased lady did arise from time to time during their intercourse, and that the accused was subjected to such provocation as might very well have been supposed to lead to considerable ill-feeling on her part towards the deceased. It is not for me to dwell upon the faults of the dead, unless with a view to the preservation of the living; but the fact of such provocation having existed is beyond a doubt. It is true also that, besides the motive of revenge which such provocation might well have awakened in some natures, there appears at first sight to have been another reason why the accused should desire the death of the late Miss Carrington—the pecuniary gain, namely, which might possibly arise from her leaving the world so suddenly that, having no warning to prepare her affairs, she would probably die

intestate—a circumstance which would be indirectly highly profitable to the accused. It is true that there is thus abundant motive proved for such an act as that which she is charged with committing. Moreover, it is true that the accused went out of the way,—and this on the evening of the day on which there had been a serious disagreement between her and the deceased,—went out of her way to gain an opportunity of conveying to the deceased food and drink in which poison might easily have been concealed; that there was even delay sufficient in the conveyance of such meat and drink to her for whom it was prepared to have allowed of its being qualified in the deadly manner which has been suggested. It is true that, after swallowing that food and drink to which the accused had had such free access, the death took place, the circumstances of which the trial is now investigating; and that a certain quantity of the very poison by which the deceased died was found in the possession of the accused. It is true that this poison was concealed out of sight, and that to all appearance an attempt was made by the accused to place the bottle which had held the poison where no human



eye was likely to light on it. All this is true ; and yet, overwhelming as such an amount and such a force of evidence seems, I shall yet be able to prove to you—yes, prove beyond the shadow of a doubt—that these things do truly and undoubtedly, in this case, co-exist with the most complete innocence on the part of the accused, in thought and word and deed.”

Here once more there was a short silence, of which every one present seemed to take advantage to draw a long breath. The advocate for the defence appeared to gain additional strength now with every word that he uttered, and the hesitation which had marked the commencement of his address was rapidly disappearing. Presently he went on :

“Now as to motive and the ill-feeling towards the deceased attributed to the accused. We have already seen, by the testimony of the servant Charlotte Grimes, who lived with her, that she was long-suffering and hard to be provoked ; and this I shall be able to corroborate with other evidence, proving that she was never given to quarrelling or ill-feeling, and was of an exceptionably kind and affectionate disposition. It must be admitted that the accused was at times provoked beyond all

measure, and to such a degree, that we should justly accuse any person of want of heart and feeling who could always remain calm and unirritated under such extreme provocation. I trust I shall be able to prove to the jury that such irritation as may have been called up by the circumstances under which the accused was placed was of a very momentary kind, and wholly inconsistent with the deep malignant feeling which the commission of such a crime as that under the consideration of the jury would imply. It is undoubtedly unfortunate that in the accounts of such disagreements as I have spoken of we have heard only the evidence of one powerfully biased in favour of the deceased. Nor can we hear other; the only other person who was ever present on such occasions being precluded from giving evidence as a witness. This is unfortunate; for clear from all suspicion in this case as Jane Cantanker certainly is, it must yet be owned that, as a witness, she has shown herself to be under the influence of very bitter feeling towards the accused.

“And now as to the conveying of that meat and drink to the deceased lady,—is there no view of that act possible but a suspicious

one? Might it not happen that the accused, conscious that an unpleasant scene had taken place that day, and that words had passed between herself and deceased, might wish to explain what she had said—to show that she had spoken hastily, and with no intention to wound? Might she not under these circumstances wish to pay some little attention to the deceased—wish for some excuse for going up to her room to exchange some friendly words with her, and say ‘good-night’? Is this too much to suppose? Is it too much to suppose, again, that in taking that food upstairs the accused might turn aside into a room which lay on her road to gain breath, or even to collect herself a little before entering upon a scene which was likely to prove of a somewhat embarrassing nature?

“Then, again, the possession by the accused of a certain amount of the very poison by which the deceased lady is proved to have died,—is this really so damnatory a circumstance as it at first appears? Let it be remembered what that poison was. Let it be remembered that this is no case of poisoning by strychnine, by antimony, by arsenic, or any other of those terrible drugs which only che-

mists or other professional persons may with propriety be expected to keep by them. Opium in all its forms, let it be remembered, is a medicine, and a medicine capable of exercising the most benign and soothing influences in certain cases of pain and unrest; a medicine used externally as well as internally every day; and one—and to this I would call special attention—to be found, to some extent, in the medicine-chests of—at a moderate computation—half the families in England. This fact cannot be too much insisted upon. The existence of some poisons in the possession of an unprofessional person would be in itself a suspicious circumstance; but the possession of the poison called laudanum is *not* a suspicious circumstance for the reasons I have given. As to its being hid away so carefully in this case, that may have been simply, as we have seen, owing to an over-exactitude in obeying the injunction of the chemist who sold the drug, and who requested that it might be kept in some place of security. It was evidently an excess of caution which led to the very elaborate concealment of the bottle where no one could light upon it by accident; and no uncommon caution either—the very look of

that formidable word "poison," as it shows conspicuous on the label of the bottle, being calculated to inspire an extreme fear lest the drug so inscribed should get into careless or dangerous hands. Considered thus, it will surely appear that this act, this hiding away of the poison-bottle, which has seemed so suspicious a thing, may be accounted for more easily than might, at first sight, be supposed possible; and much as those who desire to see an innocent person clear from all suspicion may regret that this concealment of the laudanum was ever attempted, it will surely yet be apparent to all such, after a little reflection, that there is in reality nothing in this act which may not be accounted for by causes consistent in all respects with the innocence of the accused. There are some words which have an alarming sound in themselves, and which spread a sort of panic wherever they appear; and such words as "poison" and "laudanum" are among them. To most men, and to women more especially, there is something ominous and almost terrible about such words; and though this feeling may possibly be both fanciful and unjustifiable, I would submit that it is none the less a most natural and widely-



diffused instinct. But I go further in connection with this subject than I have done; and instead of asking whether it is not possible to explain this act, which has been turned to the disadvantage of the accused, in such a manner as to prove that it is compatible with a belief in her innocence, I will ask rather whether it is not almost a proof, indirectly, of her innocence? For is it not almost a certain thing that any one who had been guilty would have destroyed this bottle and obliterated all traces of its existence, instead of keeping by her what might be so likely to prove a dangerous piece of evidence against herself in the event—a most probable one—of its being discovered?

“It has been my desire in what I have hitherto said to show that all this weight of circumstantial evidence which has been brought forward to support the present charge is yet—strong as I admit that it is—capable of two interpretations; and therefore it is that I have gone into the particulars of the case against the accused. And, indeed, it must be that this evidence is susceptible of two interpretations. It must be that the innocence of the accused is reconcilable with the facts which have been laid before the court; for though

it is true that all things took place as has been shown this day, it is equally true that she who is accused of this crime DID NOT COMMIT IT, nor entertain the very thought of it in her heart. But I need dwell no longer on this theme ; indeed, it would be waste of time to do so, when I have proof to offer the jury—proof of the strongest and most irrefragable kind—that the poison by which Diana Carrington died was administered by another hand than that of the accused. By whom, then, was it administered, is the next question. My answer is ready.

“I assert, without a moment's hesitation, that the poison by which the deceased lady met her death was taken by herself, of her own free will ; and that, moreover, without any thought that what she did might have a fatal result, or any intention of self-destruction.”

Gilbert paused for a moment at this point, and a deep breath of something almost like relief seemed to come simultaneously from the whole assembly of human beings gathered together in court that day. The appearance and bearing of the accused had told much in her favour with all present, and any announcement which

promised to dissipate the dreadful cloud which hung over her was very welcome. The barristers whispered together; and even the judicial calmness of the bench did not seem altogether proof against the natural curiosity which the last words of the counsel for the defence were calculated to awaken.

He went on:—"Gentlemen of the jury, what I have just stated is no mere assertion. I have evidence to give that shall bear out every word I have said. I shall shortly call before you for examination a witness whom the facts of this case have only just reached, and who now has only heard of it—to use the common phrase—by accident. At the eleventh hour this witness has come forward in time to save a life which, perhaps, without his testimony might have been sacrificed. He has come forward to testify that he has for some time past been in the habit of supplying the deceased lady with laudanum; that he did so under the impression that she required [it mainly for external use, and that she was liable to suffering which made its use necessary to her. She had this poison from him for the last time on the day before that on which she expired. The fact that he was ignorant of her

name, and the strange life and habits of this witness—something of which, no doubt, will come out under examination—have been the causes which have led to his being thus long in coming forward with evidence of such extreme importance; just as it is certain that the fact of his not having been visited by the agents of the police when investigating the case is to be attributed to the circumstance that he is not, strictly speaking, a chemist, but a herbalist and seedsman; while the shop which he keeps is not a chemist's shop, but such an one as is ordinarily kept by members of the trade to which he belongs. The herbalist's shop has been passed by, and the herbalist himself overlooked, in the course of those inquiries to which the case now before the jury has given rise; and so it has happened that the person who of all others was alone able to clear up this mystery has remained, till the very eleventh hour, altogether ignorant of how much depended upon evidence which he alone could give. For it is most certain that this man has till quite recently known nothing of the case which the court is now investigating; and that but for the merest accident, as I have said, his evidence,

of such matchless importance as it is, might yet never have been brought to light. As it is, however, and owing, as we phrase it, to a rare and most happy chance, which all men who love justice will hail joyfully, this man is here to give evidence this day—here to settle a question which, without his testimony, might have remained, at least, doubtful in men's eyes; or which, at worst, might have been wrongly and falsely decided, leaving in one case a slur upon a name which should be wholly pure and untarnished, and in the other condemning to a shameful death a creature as innocent of the horrible deed attributed to her as the angels are that have watched over her in her hour of danger. And, gentlemen of the jury," cried Gilbert, in conclusion, "one thing let me entreat at least of you. When this man—this witness shall have spoken, and when you shall have heard all that he has to say, be swift in what you have to do, and let your work be accomplished quickly. His evidence I fondly hope and believe is conclusive in its nature, and will leave you with little inclination to doubt or hesitate. Have great consideration for one who has already suffered as, I devoutly trust, not one of you

will ever suffer; who, born and bred in a position removed, one would have thought, from the bare possibility of such an experience as this, has yet had to pass through an ordeal which would shake the roughest and most hardened nature. Be considerate of what she must still endure while your deliberations last; and end them, in Heaven's name, as quickly as may consist with the fulfilment of the sacred duty which you have pledged yourselves to perform this day."

Gilbert sat down, and again was heard that murmur—that deep-drawn breath, which seemed to be released after being held too long. It was not applause. It was nothing that could be checked or repressed; but it spoke eloquently of profoundest interest in what was passing, and of cordial approbation of what the speaker had said. As for Gilbert himself, he felt like one who was living in some strange dream. After the first minute or two he had become insensible to what was going on around him. All nervousness and diffidence had left him. He saw but indistinctly the crowd which he was addressing. He spoke on almost mechanically—spoke because he *must*—with no hesitation or doubt as

to what he should say. Such conditions of feeling as this are not without precedent. In these supreme moments men have fulfilled their parts, and known little or nothing of what they have been doing. It is so in battle, when in the wild excitement of a charge the soldier does not know that he is wounded. It is so with some intellectual tasks which men have performed, as it were, in a trance, half-conscious only of what they did, yet doing it strangely well, and hardly recognising when they came to themselves the work of their own minds.

The lawyers, too, whispered together over this speech for the defence. Mr. Craft was there in court, and some of his friends. They were disposed to take a different view of Gilbert's fitness for the profession of advocate to that which they had expressed with so much frankness in Mr. Lethwaite's chambers. One thing that astonished them especially was that Gilbert's accent had so little, if indeed at all, impaired the effect of his speech. It had hardly been noticed. Much of it had worn off as the young barrister warmed to his work. What remained really mattered not. There are people, who speak with a certain difficulty,

who seem to impress what they have to say upon you more strongly than others who have the gift of an easy flow of words. You feel that men belonging to the first of these classes are never betrayed into saying things because their tongues have run away with them ; with regard to those who come under the second classification, you are not so sure. There was that in Gilbert Penmore's delivery which made his listeners wait very eagerly for the words that were coming, and which were got at sometimes with some little difficulty.

And now the moment had arrived when the examination of the witnesses for the defence must begin. These were fewer in number than those called for the prosecution ; and here, as in the case for the prosecution, there was one of importance beyond all others. What Jane Cantanker had done for the prosecution Cornelius Vampi must do for the defence, and more. Upon his evidence every thing now hinged.



## CHAPTER XV.

### CORNELIUS VAMPI.

WE advance yet another stage in the history of this strange trial, approaching very fast that point which may be looked upon as its climax. The witnesses for the defence are now about to be examined, and one of them has a tale to tell which will make a great change in the aspect of this remarkable case.

The first witness examined was that lady who has already been alluded to in these pages, who had been governess for many years in the Descartes family, and who had thus enjoyed many opportunities of studying Gabrielle's character from childhood upwards. Miss Curtis came to bear her testimony to the kindness and gentleness of her late pupil's character. "She had lived with her nine years," she said, "and during that time had had every opportunity of watching her, and

had seen her tried in all sorts of ways. Never, however, under any circumstances, had any thing come out which betrayed a nature capable of entertaining even the thought of committing such an act as this with which she was charged. The mere idea of such a charge being brought against her would appear to any one who had known the accused, as witness had known her, almost ridiculous. The accused was humane and kind, even in a marked degree, to every body with whom she came in contact. Her behaviour to servants and people of colour—a class generally treated with considerable hauteur by the European inhabitants of the West India islands—had been such as to win the hearts of all the dependents who came in her way.”

The prosecution had some questions to put in cross-examination, and Mr. Pry stood up :

*Mr. Pry.* In your position—that which you formerly occupied with regard to the prisoner—you must have had many opportunities of judging of her temper ?

*Witness.* I had.

*Mr. Pry.* You had. Just so. And how should you describe it ?

*Witness.* I should call it a very good one.

*Mr. Pry.* A temper invariably unruffled and serene?

*Witness.* I do not mean that entirely; that would imply under most circumstances a nature that would be cold and phlegmatic. When I speak of a good temper, I mean one that may be startled into temporary irritation, but is quickly appeased.

*Mr. Pry.* Ah, I see. A good temper in your estimation means an irritable temper,—liable to fits of passion, for instance?

*Witness.* No; that is very far from my meaning. Liable, I meant, to be provoked for a moment to irritation, but very forgiving, and anxious for reconciliation afterwards. That is what I call a good temper, and that was my pupil's preëminently.

*Mr. Pry.* Have you ever seen any indication of jealousy, now, appearing in the nature of the prisoner?

*Witness.* Not more than is almost inseparable from a warm and affectionate disposition.

*Mr. Pry.* You have observed such indications, then?

*Witness.* I have already remarked—

*Mr. Pry.* I must trouble you for a direct answer to a direct question. Have you or have you not?

*Witness.* I have, in a trifling degree.

The witness was going on to explain that she meant that some small childish indications—fears lest she should be superseded in the affections of those to whom she was greatly attached, were the only signs of jealousy which she remembered observing in her pupil; but the ingenious Mr. Pry would not allow these explanations, and would insist on a “yes” or “no” answer to every thing. He was, however, put down himself shortly afterwards when trying to lead the witness on to a condemnation of the conduct of the accused in having married contrary to the wish of her parents. The court ruled that this was not evidence in the present trial; which it certainly was not.

The examination of this witness was to be followed immediately by that of Cornelius Vampi. This, since the allusion which had been made to its great importance in the speech of the counsel for the defence, was looked for by every one in court with the most eager anxiety; and so strong a feeling for that poor forlorn.

little figure in the dock had begun to lay hold of the spectators assembled to witness the trial, that men and women alike came to be touched with a feeling of partisanship as they looked at her, and were ready almost to offer up a prayer that the evidence of this new witness might stand her in good stead.

There was a sort of stir and commotion in court now that the moment had arrived for the examination of this important personage; and there was even a certain buzz of whispered talk when the witness entered the box, and stood there, erect, portly, unembarrassed, ready to tell his tale.

His appearance was certainly calculated to inspire confidence in the minds of all who saw him. There was a certain guilelessness about him, a certain unworldliness, and a sense of enjoyment which no one could think—except of course the counsel for the other side—of associating with treachery and deceit. As he looked from the witness-box round about him on the assembled multitude, he seemed, as usual, positively to beam with good-nature and happiness. As soon as he had been sworn, and had duly answered to his name, which seemed to make a great sensation in court, the

questioning began; the examination-in-chief being conducted by Gilbert himself. The first question was an inquiry as to the nature of his occupation :

*Witness.* I am a herbalist and seedsman.

*Mr. Penmore.* You also sell drugs, do you not ?

*Witness.* Drugs, corn-plasters, horse and cattle medicines, cough lozenges, and a variety of other articles of the same nature, such as blisters, leeches, and galvanic belts.

*Mr. Penmore.* Do you remember a particular day in December last, when a lady came to your shop to make a purchase of laudanum ?

*Witness.* I remember it very well.

*Mr. Penmore.* That visit was followed by others, was it not ?

*Witness.* Yes, by several others.

*Mr. Penmore.* And always with the same object.

*Witness.* Yes, invariably.

*Mr. Penmore.* Did you make any difficulty about selling her the laudanum ?

*Witness.* Yes, at first I did, and only allowed her to have a small quantity. She showed me, however, a doctor's order, addressed to some country chemist directing that

the bearer should be supplied with laudanum by him. It was dated two years back, and the place from which it was written was some town in the West of England, some unimportant place, the name of which I forget.

*Mr. Penmore.* And on the strength of that you allowed her to have the laudanum?

*Witness.* On the strength of that, and on her own representation that she positively required it as a medicine. She alleged that she was a great sufferer from neuralgia. She said that sometimes one of her eyes was seriously affected by the pain, and showed me a peculiar mark of a vein running down one side of her face, from the eye to the angle of the jaw, which she said was brought out by the disease.

*Mr. Penmore.* Was it alleged that the laudanum was required for external use alone?

*Witness.* Not exclusively. She stated that it was principally for external application that she wanted it; but that sometimes, when suffering very much, she was obliged to take it internally as well.

*Mr. Penmore.* And after that first application, did the lady come to you again?

*Witness.* Yes, very soon; and from that time her visits were frequent.

*Mr. Penmore.* Do you remember the occasion of her last visit?

*Witness.* Yes, perfectly; she made an appointment for another day, which was an unusual thing with her.

*Mr. Penmore.* Can you state the exact day on which she came to you last?

*Witness.* Yes; I have it down in my book (*producing book*). It was on the 26th of January, and the appointment she made was for the next day but one, the 28th.

*Mr. Penmore.* And that appointment was not kept?

*Witness.* No; I never saw her again.

*Mr. Penmore.* Did you know the lady's name?

*Witness.* No; she would never mention it.

*Mr. Penmore.* And was it not inscribed in the doctor's order which you spoke of?

*Witness.* No; the order alluded to her simply as "the bearer." There was no name.

*Mr. Penmore.* Were you sufficiently well acquainted with the appearance of the lady in question to be able to identify her personally?

*Witness.* Unquestionably.

*Mr. Penmore.* Could you identify her portrait—her photographic portrait?



*Witness.* I believe I could do so.

*Mr Penmore* (after a slight delay, during which, amidst the most breathless silence in the court, a photograph was handed to the witness). Is that the portrait of the lady to whom you sold the laudanum?

*Witness.* It is. (The sensation among the spectators at this moment was marked and irrepressible. They seemed to breathe again.)

*Mr. Penmore.* You have no doubt upon the subject?

*Witness.* I have no doubt whatever.

[Old Judge apart to young Judge: "This invention is becoming an important one in connection with criminal jurisprudence."] Examination resumed.


*Mr. Penmore.* Is there any other means of identification which suggests itself to you?

*Witness.* I should remember the bag or reticule which the lady used to bring with her.

*Mr. Penmore.* And how should you know it?

*Witness.* By the clasp, which I have often observed. It has a crest engraved upon it—a half-lion rampant holding a sword in one of its paws.

*Mr. Penmore.* Is that the bag in question?



(A lady's bag with gilt clasp was here handed to the witness, who examined it, and especially the clasp, attentively.)

*Witness.* Yes, it is.

The counsel for the defence made a slight pause here, and referred to some papers which he held in his hand. Then he spoke again; and it will be observed that from this moment he spoke of "the lady," who had hitherto been only so alluded to, as "the deceased Miss Carrington;" thus showing that he considered the identity of the two to be conclusively proved.

*Mr. Penmore.* The laudanum which you sold to the late Miss Carrington, was it supplied latterly by you in larger quantities?


*Witness.* Yes; she complained of not having enough, and of having to come so often; so that latterly she had it in larger quantities.

*Mr. Penmore.* I have only one more question to ask you, Mr. Vampi. Is this bottle one which has come from your shop? (A bottle was here handed to witness.)

*Witness* (after examining the bottle). Yes, I believe it to be so. At all events it is the exact counterpart in label and every other respect of that which I should sell on such an occasion.

The excitement which attended the examination of Cornelius Vampi was from the first very great. It was shared by Gabrielle herself. To her it must be remembered that his evidence was altogether new, and that it solved what was as great a difficulty to her as it had been to others—namely, the great doubt as to who it was who had really administered the poison to the deceased lady. She knew that she had *not*,—that was all. She was so much interested in what this witness had to say, that at last, half-unconscious of what she did, she put aside her veil, that she might see and hear the better. The sight of that innocent face impressed every one in court, and helped to force the tide which had now begun to set in her favour.

When Gilbert sat down, at the conclusion of the examination of Cornelius Vampi, Serjeant Probyn, for the prosecution, instantly rose prepared to conduct the cross-examination of this very important witness himself. An important witness indeed; for it was felt by every one that unless his evidence should break down under cross-examination, it must most certainly turn the scale. The learned Serjeant wore his most imposing air, and frowned upon the wit-



ness in silence for some time. But Cornelius was not the man to be put down in this way. What! he who consorted on intimate terms with Jupiter and Mars, put down by a helpless mortal who had probably never read a line of Albertus Magnus in his life! Not likely, that.

There was a great deal of consultation between Serjeant Probyn and his junior, and much covert talk of attorneys, at this time—a great deal of whispering and pushing about of notes written on small scraps of paper. At length the Serjeant, still wearing a portentous frown, hitched his gown up at the shoulder and began.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You call yourself “herbalist and seedsman,” I think, do you not, Mr.-er-er (referring to paper)—Mr. Vampi?

*Witness.* Yes, sir; I *am* a herbalist and seedsman.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And yet, despite this designation, under which you are, so to speak, set forth, you are in the habit of selling medicines, and even, as it would appear, dangerous poisons?

*Witness.* I do occasionally.

*Serjeant Probyn.* O, you do occasionally! and may I ask why, under those circum-


stances, you do not style yourself "chemist" or "druggist"?

*Witness.* Because I am principally herbalist and seedsman. I put up the designation which I go by chiefly. If my shop-front were inscribed with the names of all the articles which I deal in, it would cover the whole window.

*Serjeant Probyn.* There is no occasion for any thing of that sort. The nature of your business is not indicated sufficiently by the words "herbalist and seedsman;" and it is probably in consequence of that defect that the police were so far misled as not to visit you when the inquiries into the death of the late Miss Carrington were first set on foot.—Enough of that, however. I wish to inquire next how it happens that you have not come forward earlier with your evidence?

*Witness.* Because till yesterday I had never heard of the case.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Come, come, Mr. Vampi, this will scarcely do. Do you mean to tell the jury that this case, which has been so widely discussed, both in the newspapers and in private conversation, never attracted your attention till yesterday?



*Witness.* I have already said so.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Do you not read the newspapers, Mr. Vampi?

*Witness.* Very rarely; and lately especially I have been so occupied as to have no time for any thing of the sort.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And your neighbours and customers have never spoken to you on the subject?

*Witness.* Certainly not; or if they have, not so as to attract my attention, or give me the least idea that it was any thing with which I could be mixed up in any way.

*Serjeant Probyn.* It is a very strange thing, you must allow, Mr. Vampi, that an affair of this sort, which has been the talk of the town, should all this time have escaped you? Are you not in the habit of talking with your customers, Mr. Vampi?

*Witness.* My customers are generally much too full of their own wants, and their own troubles, to talk to me upon other subjects. Besides, I have lately been less in the shop than usual.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You have been less in the shop than usual, eh? and yet you told us just now that you had been especially busy

of late. How do you reconcile these two statements, Mr. Vampi?

*Witness.* I have said that I was busy, and I have said that I was not much in my shop. It follows then, as your knowledge of logic will inform you, that I was busy *out* of my shop. I was at work in my study, or laboratory as I should rather call it.

It was one of the things most dreaded by Gilbert, and the colleague who was associated with him in the defence, that the counsel for the prosecution should find out Vampi's weak side, and get any idea of the nature of those studies in which the philosopher was in the habit of engaging. There seemed rational cause to apprehend lest the jury should mistrust the evidence of a man who constructed horoscopes, and dealt in the elixir of life. It may be conceived, then, with how much alarm Gilbert watched the turn which things were now taking. The examination went on.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You were at work in your study or laboratory, were you? and may I ask, Mr. Vampi, what was the nature of your undertakings—were you inventing a new corn-plaster, or studying a patent blister?

*Witness.* I was doing neither of those

things, sir, though a man might be worse occupied. I was engaged, however, in studies of a more exalted kind.

Gilbert's heart sank within him as he heard that answer. He knew from his friend Lethwaite what might be expected if Cornelius was once launched on his favourite theme. Meanwhile the cross-examination does not halt.

*Serjeant Probyn.* "In more exalted studies!" Ay, ay, ay. May I ask of what nature, Mr. Vampi? Of a material or a spiritual kind?

*Witness.* Of both kinds. Spiritual, as my studies have been of the heavenly bodies, and their influence on the fortunes of my fellow-creatures; material, as they have been directed to such combinations of material drugs as might tend to alleviate suffering, and bring back vitality, and even youth itself, to those who have declined somewhat into the vale of years.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Upon my word, but these are studies with a vengeance, Mr. Vampi! You are something of a magician, then?


*Witness.* No; an interpreter merely. Spiritually, I interpret to mankind what the stars teach me of their different fates; and physically, I combine those herbs and drugs whose



properties I know, and give my fellow-creatures the benefit of the result.

It may be conceived what were Gilbert's sensations as he heard what Cornelius Vampi said. How might the value of his evidence be diminished by such folly as this! How could judge or jury be expected to believe in a witness who thus pleaded guilty to a belief in horoscopes and elixirs of youth! It was dangerous in the last degree. How terrible it was that the man should have got upon this theme! Gilbert determined that an effort should be made—and that at once—to stop the thing before it got farther, and protect her whom he was defending from this new danger. The counsel for the defence rose then, and submitted to the court that this was not evidence.

There followed then the customary debating which such an objection always raises; the counsel for the prosecution contending that it was his duty to ascertain how far the witness was, or was not, a trustworthy one, and that any evidence which went to strengthen or invalidate his testimony was fit evidence to be taken in court that day, and pertinent to the matter in hand. Considerable discussion fol-



lowed on this assertion of Serjeant Probyn's; but the court ruled at last that the evidence in question was not evidence in this case.

The learned Serjeant, nothing daunted, proceeded with his cross-examination on a new tack. Alas, every thing seemed, sooner or later, to lead back to the dangerous subject. Cross-examination continued.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And now, Mr. Vampi, will you be kind enough to inform the court how it happened that you did *at last* come to hear of the sad story which is under investigation in this court to-day?

*Witness.* I heard of it at last through one of my clients.

*Serjeant Probyn.* "One of your clients," eh? That is a curious expression. I suppose you mean some one who consulted you?

*Witness.* That is my meaning.

*Serjeant Probyn.* Will you be good enough to tell the court the name of the individual in question?

*Witness.* Certainly. His name is Lethwaite—Mr. Julius Lethwaite.

*Serjeant Probyn.* O, indeed! Mr. Julius Lethwaite (referring to a paper). One of the witnesses for the defence, I see. And

was this gentleman a material or a spiritual client?

*Witness.* He came to consult me as one who was able to interpret the occult language of the oracles on high.

Again the counsel for the defence interposed, and submitted that the evidence of the witness was wandering away from the point; and again, after much discussion, the verdict of the court was on his side.

Serjeant Probyn seemed utterly unabashed by this second decision against him. He knew that the witness under examination had said enough before he could be stopped to show the jury something of his visionary character, and he did not despair of more of this being brought out still, as the examination went on. For he had not done with him yet, as the next question proved.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You have spoken with great confidence, Mr. Vampi, of your conviction that the lady to whom you sold this laudanum and the late Miss Carrington were one and the same person. This is a matter of such importance that I must ask you very seriously if you are perfectly convinced that this is so?

*Witness.* I am perfectly convinced.



*Serjeant Probyn.* And on what do you base that conviction?

*Witness.* On the testimony of my own eyes. I find that the face portrayed in this photograph is, in features, expression, and every other respect, the counterpart of the countenance of that lady to whom I sold the laudanum.

*Serjeant Probyn.* You are aware that you are speaking on oath?

*Witness.* I am perfectly aware of it.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And that mistakes of identity are very common?

*Witness.* That I am also aware of.

*Serjeant Probyn.* I think you have mentioned that your opportunities of studying the features of deceased were not very numerous. May I ask how many times you have seen her unveiled?

*Witness.* I have seen her unveiled twice.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And do you mean to say that on the strength of having twice seen the deceased lady's face you will speak unhesitatingly on this question of her identity—and that with a portrait, too, which may give but a very imperfect idea of the deceased?

*Witness.* Had this been a portrait done by

the hand of man, I might have been compelled to speak with greater diffidence. But the sun, sir, is a mighty artist; and we must admit that his portraits, whether they please us or not, are certainly re-productions of some phase or other of the persons who have sat for them.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And you consider, do you, Mr. Vampi, that those two glimpses which were permitted you of the late Miss Carrington's face were sufficient to justify you in speaking so confidently as you do?


*Witness.* Most certainly. One of those "glimpses," as you call them, lasted a considerable time, and I had the opportunity of thoroughly examining the poor lady's countenance in every part.

*Serjeant Probyn.* And what, may I ask, was the occasion of your being permitted thus to examine the deceased lady's features?

*Witness.* I had asked to be allowed to do so.

*Serjeant Probyn.* That was rather a peculiar request, Mr. Vampi, was it not? Will you inform the court what was the occasion of your making it?

*Witness.* I had undertaken to make inquiry, for the poor lady's benefit, as to what



her star promised for the future; and I thought that before completing her horoscope, it would be well that I should see her face, and see in what respects it resembled, or differed from, the physiognomies of other persons born under the same planet. It is one of the characteristics of the art mystic—

Serjeant Probyn was obliged to interrupt the witness at this point, as he saw that if he failed to do so, the counsel for the defence would certainly interfere to prevent Cornelius from committing himself farther. Surely it is not too much to say that this conflict was like some passage of arms of old, with a life at stake upon its issue.

The long cross-examination of this witness was now brought to an end.

*Serjeant Probyn.* I am afraid, Mr. Vampi, that the “art mystic” must be left alone for the present, however interesting it might be to hear it treated of by one so profoundly initiated in its arcana as yourself. I have now only one other question which it is necessary to ask before you leave the witness-box. It is this: How does it happen, that since you sold so many bottles of laudanum at different times to the deceased lady,—and in this I will

remark that it seems to me you have been greatly to blame,—how does it happen, I say, that one, and one only, of these bottles has been found in her possession?

*Witness.* I will, with permission, answer your remark as to my being to blame in selling the laudanum to the deceased, before proceeding to reply to your other question. Laudanum is, it must be remembered, a medicine, and not merely a poison, and it is quite easy to obtain at the different chemists' shops, where it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to purchase such drugs as are simply poisons, and nothing else. It is not by any means the custom to surround the purchase of opium with difficulties and restrictions; and the order which I have already alluded to, signed by a medical man, was quite sufficient, as it appears to me, to justify my selling laudanum to the bearer of it. As to the question concerning the bottles, it is soon answered. The lady was in the habit of returning my empty bottles to me whenever she came for a fresh supply, not wishing probably to have them accumulating on her hands. The bottle produced in court must have been the last which she received from me, and which,

unhappily, she was never able to bring back.


With this Cornelius Vampi's evidence came to an end, and he was at length allowed to retire from the witness-box. There was no one in court who could fail to be struck by the strange mixture of common sense with delusion which had been revealed in the course of Vampi's evidence. On all practical points, what he had said had been so straightforward and to the purpose; and yet, let the slightest chance be given him of mounting his favourite hobby, and he was ready for the wildest and most preposterous excursions upon its back forthwith. Upon the whole, that cross-examination, however, had been but little injurious to the cause of our poor prisoner. The astrologer had stuck to all his points immovable. On that question of the identity of the deceased lady with the unknown, to whom he had sold the laudanum, he was firm, as also with regard to the exact date when her visits to him had ceased; and these, after all, were the really important parts of his evidence. To say that it was listened to throughout with profound attention is to give but a feeble idea of the extreme interest which every word he



said excited in the minds of his audience. Had the case under trial been in the least degree a less serious one, and had the issue of the trial itself been less than a question of life and death, a considerable amount of amusement would have been felt by all present at the grotesque way in which that forbidden subject, in which Cornelius took such delight, kept re-appearing in his evidence, and at the evident mortification experienced by the philosopher when he was prevented from enlarging upon it.

To Gabrielle, as has been said, all that Vampi had to say was matter of an entirely new, as well as a most momentous, kind. It solved that mystery—a mystery as much to her as to others—as to who it was that had really administered that poison to the dead lady. She could not but feel, ignorant as she was of all things connected with the law, that it was on this man's statement—on its consistency and credibility—that her fate hinged. Her common sense told her this, and so she listened to every word of that evidence with an attention that did not wander.

The trial was a long one, and though near its end, could not be completed on the day of



its commencement. It was getting dark too, the days being now very short; and it was agreed that what yet remained to be got through must be postponed till next day.

Another night of bitter suspense for Gabrielle and for her husband. Only one now, it is true; for next morning all must be decided. Still that one was terrible. The excitement about the court and its purlieus, and indeed through all the town, on the evening of this day was very great. The evening papers were sought after eagerly, though they had of necessity gone to press before the business of the day was over; still they had something to tell, and they were quickly bought up. And then there were rumours—rumours of great dissensions existing among the jury; that one of these had said that he would starve before he would convict that innocent young creature; and that another had affirmed that there were points against her which he could not get over—rumours that the old judge had told some one that he felt as if it was one of his own daughters standing there before him, and that his heart ached for the young lady—rumours that Cornelius Vampi, the astrologer, had vowed that if the verdict went against her,

the prisoner, he would surely destroy himself, as having helped, by selling the laudanum, to bring about the dreadful result.

And so all had to remain in suspense, till the coming day should make the end known to them.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### LAST STAGE BUT ONE.

THE morning dawned bright and clear upon the day that was to decide the fate of Gabrielle Penmore—the day that was to see her branded as a murderess, and consigned to the condemned cell, or led forth into the sunlight, almost with the crown of martyrdom upon her head; not only without a stain upon her character, but free from the very faintest shadow of a suspicion even,—as pure from any such thing as a newly-born infant. One of these two things must result from that day's inquiry. There was no middle course. The sun had never risen upon a day fraught with a more momentous issue, nor had any inquiry ever been entered on in a court of law on which a more important question hinged. Life or death; honour or shame.

The two principal actors in this tremendous drama—for the husband was included

with the wife in the powerful interest which the trial had awakened in the public mind—both showed many symptoms of the wearing condition of anxiety in which the previous night had been spent. Both appeared to be thoroughly worn out, and it was very evident that there had been little or no rest for either of them during the dark hours which had intervened since they appeared in court on the day before. A curious observer might even have thought that there was something of a change for the worse visible in the looks of others besides these two, and that the judges, the jury, and even the spectators themselves wore a kind of haggard look, more than had been observable yesterday.

The work still left to be done now was not to be compared in quantity to what had been got through on the previous day. There were two or three witnesses only to be examined and cross-examined; after which would come the prosecutor's reply on the defence, the judge's summing-up, and—the verdict.

The trial commenced on this second day with the recall of some of the witnesses who had given evidence on the previous day, in order that they might be reëxamined on cer-

tain points. Cornelius Vampi was thus recalled, that he might testify to the strong animus shown towards the prisoner by Jane Cantanker, first when she had applied to him for a charm which might insure the ruin of the accused, and secondly when he had met her, as has been already described, triumphing in the captivity of the accused, outside the gaol of Newgate. The doctor was also re-examined as to the exact amount of laudanum found in the body of the deceased; but no additional facts of any sort of importance were at this time elicited.

The first new witness called at this time was old Smaggsdale, who came up to corroborate the evidence of his master as to the identity of the lady who paid such frequent visits to the herbalist's shop with the original of the portrait which Vampi had already sworn to. Every effort was made to shake the testimony of this witness, and he was especially asked in cross-examination how he could speak confidently on this "question," when the lady had always been so closely veiled. Old Smagg, however, stuck to his point. On one of the two occasions on which the deceased had unveiled herself to the philosopher Smaggsdale

had been present. He was also able to swear to the lady's bag which was produced.

Julius Lethwaite was next called. His evidence bore on the discovery of that bottle, at whose finding the reader has already assisted. The greatest interest was manifested by all present as he told that tale which we know already. The bottle had already been identified by Cornelius Vampi, and it was now sworn to by Lethwaite as the phial which he had seen in the escritoire belonging to the late Miss Carrington. The evidence of this witness was felt to be of such extreme importance that some attempt was made by the prosecution to detract, if possible, from the value of his testimony. The case was assuming a new aspect since these final witnesses for the defence had appeared.

Mr. Pry rose then to cross-examine this last witness.

*Mr. Pry.* You are acquainted personally with the prisoner, I believe, are you not, Mr. Lethwaite?

*Witness.* Yes, I am proud to say I am.

*Mr. Pry.* Just so. You would be glad, no doubt, to say what might exercise a favourable influence on her case.

This question was at once objected to on the part of the defence, and it was ruled that the witness need make no answer to it; so Mr. Pry had to begin again.

*Mr. Pry.* Will you allow me to ask you what you *are*, Mr. Lethwaite?

*Witness* (after considerable hesitation, during which he had in vain sought for a satisfactory way of expressing himself). I am a drummer. [Some degree of amusement was excited among the audience by this answer, all expression of which was instantly suppressed.]

*Mr. Pry.* "A drummer!" Will you have the kindness to explain to the jury what you mean by that, Mr. Lethwaite?

*Witness.* I mean that I play on the drums in an orchestra.

*Mr. Pry.* Do you mean to say that you get your living in that way?

*Witness.* Yes, at present I do in a great degree.

*Mr. Pry.* "At present!" Then it is fair to presume that this—this—drumming has not always furnished you with a means of subsistence? May I ask what other pursuits you may have engaged in?



*Witness.* I have previously been engaged in commercial pursuits.

*Mr. Pry.* O, indeed; from commerce to drumming; "from grave to gay." Quite a remarkable transition. (About this time the learned gentleman, beginning to perceive that the line he was adopting was looked upon as being somewhat irrelevant to the case, and that he was likely to be again interrupted, adroitly passed to another field of inquiry.) But we will not occupy ourselves any longer with the very remarkable and incongruous professional pursuits in which you have, first and last, been engaged. We will, I say, let that matter drop, Mr. Lethwaite; and I will next inquire how you came to be acquainted with a certain Mr. Cornelius Vampi, who was recently examined as a witness for the defence?

*Witness* (after some hesitation). I had heard him spoken of a good deal, and I went to consult him.

*Mr. Pry.* O, indeed! To consult him as a chemist, I presume?

*Witness.* No; not precisely as a chemist.

*Mr. Pry.* Then I suppose it was in his capacity as a fortune-teller or astrologer that you consulted him?

*Witness* (doggedly). Yes, it was.

*Mr. Pry.* You are a believer in magic, then, Mr. Lethwaite? You live in the nineteenth century,—in an age of electric telegraphs and railroads; an age when superstitions of all kinds are vanishing before the advancing light of science,—and you are still a believer in magic?

*Witness.* I did not say so.

*Mr. Pry.* You did not say so; but you implied as much, by stating that you had consulted this Mr. Vampi in his capacity as a soothsayer.

*Witness.* Yes; but I did not say that I believed in all his predictions.

*Mr. Pry.* That, I say, was implied. Why else should you have consulted him?

*Witness.* I might have consulted him out of curiosity—

*Mr. Pry.* Come, come, Mr. Lethwaite, that will hardly do. Do you believe in this Mr. Vampi's pretensions, or do you not? Are you prepared to admit that you—living, as I have said, in this great and glorious age, one of whose leading characteristics is the general diffusion of light and knowledge—that you, I say, can go backward so far as to place any

confidence in those occult arts, which even the most grossly superstitious among men have ceased to believe in, and which only the most ignorant and contemptible of mankind now think of practising?

The cross-examination was once more interrupted at this point. This discussion was an interruption. It was irrelevant, not connected with the matter in hand. The cross-examination must be confined to points of evidence bearing on the case, or be discontinued altogether. Mr. Pry was obliged then to be satisfied with what he had already extracted from this witness in connection with his belief in the secret sciences, and to go on to something else, as thus:

*Mr. Pry.* I will now tax your memory on another point, Mr. Lethwaite. Did you not on the twenty-seventh of January last receive an intimation from the prisoner that the rooms then occupied by Miss Carrington would be vacant on the following day?

*Witness.* I am not quite sure of the date, but I did receive such an intimation about the time you mention.

*Mr. Pry.* And did you not act upon it?

*Witness.* Yes, I did.

*Mr. Pry.* And did you take possession of the rooms upon that occasion?

*Witness.* No: they were not available for the purpose.

*Mr. Pry.* And why not, may I ask?

*Witness.* Miss Carrington had died in the mean time most unexpectedly, and her remains were not at that time removed.

*Mr. Pry.* Exactly so. It would appear that the prisoner had calculated on the death of the deceased lady; otherwise she would not have suggested that another occupant should succeed to the possession of her rooms.

*Witness.* Hardly so. The accused had reason to expect that the unfortunate Miss Carrington would go away on the day in question. Had the accused known that Miss Carrington was to die, she would also have known that the rooms would not be vacant, it not being the custom in this country to remove the body from a house on the day succeeding that on which the decease takes place.

There was a great pause after this answer had been given. It was felt on all sides that the junior counsel for the prosecution had made a mistake in his last question, and that the answer of the witness was an answer

which told very strongly in favour of the defence. It is probable that Mr. Pry felt this to be the case himself. At all events he did not ask any more questions, and intimated to Mr. Lethwaite that he might leave the box—a permission of which that gentleman was not slow to avail himself. He had done what he could to serve his friend. His examination was followed by that of Jonathan Goodrich, who simply corroborated in all points the evidence as to the finding of the laudanum-bottle which had just been given by the last witness. He was not cross-examined; and, upon his retirement from the witness-box, Gilbert Penmore rose once more, and announced that—

The defence was now complete.


The prosecution and the defence had each of them now put the facts of the case as they bore in favour of each before the jury. The evidence on which the great decision was to rest had all been given. According to time-honoured custom it was now the privilege of the prosecutor to make a sort of answer to the arguments put forward by the defence. This, no doubt, is only fair. The prosecution having to open the case cannot know at the beginning what line the counsel for the de-

fence will take; and this might give the last, if left with the final word, an undue advantage. Also, supposing him to have put forward any unsound statement likely to exercise undue influence with the jury, here is an opportunity for the prosecutor to expose it, and to counteract such statement by his own arguments. The reply of the prosecution is seldom a long one. It is one of the final stages of a trial, and is a signal to all men that the end is approaching.

It was small wonder that at this time the long and painful suspense endured by Gabrielle Penmore should have begun to tell upon her. Her strength was fairly undermined. That old judge, who had had so much sad experience of such scenes as these, had not failed to observe a strange sort of restlessness which had come over her. The fatigue which she had undergone had quite gone beyond her powers of endurance, and at times she seemed to waver on her seat as if she would fall. The old man whispered something to an attendant, and the proceedings were suspended, while the prisoner was removed for a time into the open air, and strengthened for what was yet to come with restoratives. It was noticed by many

how the young advocate for the defence, in his place among the barristers' benches, was suffering also at this time, and what frequent disturbed glances he directed at this bitter moment, towards the dock behind him.

The witnesses who had been called for the defence had changed the aspect of the case before the jury in a manner which no one had anticipated; and the prosecution had, as we have seen, already sought to shake the testimony of those witnesses in cross-examination, or failing that, to make them out untrustworthy, fanciful,—such persons, in short, as were not to be relied on as witnesses. This was the line of argument adhered to now by Serjeant Probyn in his reply on the evidence for the defence. He would go through that evidence, he said, carefully from beginning to end; but first he had something to say in connection with the circumstances under which that defence had been presented before the jury, to which he begged their earnest attention. The case which the jury had assembled to try was one which had excited a vast deal of sympathetic feeling. Great interest had been awakened in the public mind by the fact that the prisoner placed at the bar, with



the most serious charge known in law against her, belonged to a class of life the members of which rarely appeared in the dock of the Old Bailey. The prisoner not only did not belong to the criminal classes, but was a lady of good and most respectable connections, and was in every way calculated to awaken that feeling of interest and sympathy which, beyond a doubt, had been extended towards her by a great number of people. As if to increase the strong feeling of popular excitement with which this trial has been regarded by the world outside, there was an additional element of interest imported into it, of which it was the duty of the counsel for the prosecution to say something. He alluded to the close connection which existed between the prisoner at the bar and the counsel who had undertaken to conduct her defence. The existence of that relationship was no secret; and he believed that the knowledge of it had strengthened very much that desire that the defence might win the day, if he might so speak, which the learned Serjeant believed had possession of most persons who were present in court that day. He entreated the jury to put all such considerations away from their minds,



and to regard, in coming to their decision, the interests of justice, and of justice only. The evidence which had been put before them was what they had to do with, and that alone—the evidence and the degree of confidence with which that evidence was to be regarded ; and here there did appear to be some ground for hesitation. A great question remained to be decided on by the jury. How far were those witnesses, who had given such remarkable testimony in favour of the line of defence adopted by his learned friend, worthy of trust and belief ? The principal witness, on whose evidence, indeed, the whole defence rested—did it appear to the jury that this was a man on whom, in a question of such importance as the present one, implicit reliance could be placed ? He was a wild visionary character. He was professedly an astrologer and fortune-teller—one who believed in, and practised, what are called the occult arts. What such a person spoke of as facts might be, in reality, nothing but dreams, the fancies of an imagination disordered by long and wilful indulgence.

This was the line adopted by the learned serjeant. He went through all the evidence

that had been given, and tried to weaken its effect by depreciating those who had given it. What sort of witness, he would ask, was a professed astrologer and fortune-teller? Was that the kind of man in whose testimony any confidence could be placed? Then with regard to the question of identity, was the evidence satisfactory as to that particular? By his own account, this Mr. Vampi—the very name had something unreliable about it—this Mr. Vampi had only seen the face of the deceased on two occasions, and yet he professes to speak with confidence of his power of pronouncing decidedly that the lady of whom he had thus caught two cursory glimpses and the original of the portrait shown to him in court were one and the same person. And in a case of such importance as this, was it right to trust so much to a thing like a portrait? There was always a degree of uncertainty attaching to likenesses, even when executed by the photographic process. Were not people continually in doubt about such portraits as to who they were meant for? Was it not a common thing to hear people say, in speaking of such likenesses, “Well, I should never have known it if you had not told me”?

Thus he went on. He spoke of the un-

certainly which must attend any attempt to identify such a thing as a medicine-bottle, the very labels on which might have been affixed after the bottle was found. And then he adverted to the extreme improbability of the statement made by the defence, that the witness Vampi had remained for so long a time in ignorance of facts so widely known and so openly discussed as those which were connected with the present case; he confessed that he found a difficulty, which he could not help thinking that the jury would share, in receiving such a statement as this. The case for the defence was supported, there could be no doubt, by some very strange witnesses. The jury had received a mixed testimony, supported by a nineteenth-century astrologer and a gentleman who lived by playing on the drums. It was not often that representatives of these two uncommon professions appeared in a court of justice.

In short, the learned Serjeant did—as has been said—all that he could to depreciate the witnesses for the defence, and to invalidate their evidence; a strong proof of the value which their testimony bore in his eyes. *It* was impregnable, and he must therefore seek

to throw doubt on the characters of those from whom it had come.

Another of the sections into which a trial is divided got over. The end is drawing near now in very truth. This reply of the prosecutor is the last stage but one. Gilbert, who has listened breathless to every word of that speech, which has here been condensed to the utmost, would like to answer it again, did the arrangements of our courts of justice permit. But they do not; and he is obliged to content himself with the thought that, at any rate, it *will* be answered now by the next speaker, and that with such wisdom and discretion as can only come from a lifetime given to the consideration of questions such as these. For the next speaker is the judge, and on what he says all will depend.

There is—as has been said—no function fulfilled by man upon this earth which partakes so much of the divine as this that the judge executes; and now the moment had arrived when this function was to be exercised under circumstances of the extremest impressiveness. There was no need to enforce silence now. The scales were adjusted, and the evidence given was about to be weighed in them. Which

way would the balance turn? Men hoped and believed that they knew; but there was a doubt still. And so all leant forward with indescribable eagerness to catch even the first few words of the judge's speech, which were uttered in low faint tones, but audible because of the intensity of the silence.

## CHAPTER XVII.


### THE MISTS BEGIN TO CLEAR AWAY.

WE have got to the last stage of all, and the end draws very near.

In the last chapter we left all the great concourse of persons who were assembled in the court-house of the Old Bailey to witness the trial of Gabrielle Penmore waiting anxiously till they should hear what was about to be said by him on whom the duty devolved of balancing, one against the other, those two theories which had been laid before the court; one of which assumed the guilt, and the other the innocence, of the prisoner at the bar. The relative worth of these, the degree of credit of which each was worthy, and by which of the two arguments the jury were to be influenced in coming to their final decision, it was now the judge's work to decide.

“In the course of all the long years during

which I have exercised the office of judge," the old man said, "no case has ever come before me similar to this in strength of evidence on both sides, or in which each has seemed to preponderate in its turn with such an overwhelming force. That for the prosecution, as it was developed before us step by step and point by point, seemed gradually to shut up one by one each avenue of escape by which the accused might have hoped to pass, until at last there came to be amassed against her such an accumulated load of testimony as made it appear an impossible thing that she should ever emerge from under so overwhelming a structure. Such was the effect of the evidence which was brought forward to support the prosecution. It was almost conclusive—as convincing probably as circumstantial evidence ever can be. And yet no sooner had the counsel for the defence put forward his view of the case than it became evident that there was still one loop-hole left by which escape was yet attainable for the accused—one avenue by which it was possible for her to pass forth into the light, unhindered and unhurt, if only it could be shown that the way along that avenue was clear and unencumbered."




And with that the old man proceeded to pass in review all the evidence which had been taken in court during these two days. He went through it all with the utmost care and completeness, commenting on the testimony of each witness in its turn with infinite clearness and perspicuity. Those few words which he had spoken to begin with formed, so to speak, the text which he now went on to illustrate more fully. The reader will conceive with what attention he was listened to as he thus examined all that had been put forward by the different witnesses. To two persons in that court each word that fell from the old man's lips was indeed of awful import. Throughout this trial there had been something of comfort to Gabrielle in the thought that her cause was in such hands as those of the old judge, and that her life was in his keeping. She had felt throughout a sort of trust in him, together with something of reverence, which had even made her try to stand when first he began to speak,—an attempt which had soon, however, been abandoned, as her forces had quickly given way.

At first, and as the evidence for the prosecution was passing under the judge's considera-




tion, it seemed to Gabrielle that this one in whom she had trusted had turned against her, so completely did he do justice to the evidence, showing how strong it was, how full, how convincing. It made her tremble to hear him admit this; it had never appeared to her before how strong, how almost impregnable, the case was against her, what a mass of damning proof the accusers were possessed of. What was this righteous judge doing? He seemed to be accumulating evidence against her. Did he think her guilty in his heart? Did his sense of justice compel him to condemn her?

It was indeed a terrible moment. More than half a century of law-study had taught this gentleman to know what evidence was, to understand it fully and estimate it truly, whether in its strength or in its weakness; and therefore it was that he was able to appreciate the full force of this evidence against Gabrielle Penmore—which indeed the reader will admit was most strong—and to put it before those who listened to him with an extraordinary force and clearness. So much for the prosecution. But when at last the time came for considering what might be said on the other



side, and the evidence for the defence came to be reviewed in its turn, then men saw that all that proof which had seemed so complete and so conclusive as it was spread forth before them must give place to proofs yet more complete and more conclusive, and that it was only to show how irresistible were these last that this wise gentleman had dwelt so long on the strength of those which they were to supersede. If the first arguments were strong, what must be the strength of those which could overpower them?

For in his judgment, he said, this evidence for the defence was evidence against which no opposition could stand. It was a strange case. The facts which had been proved in support of the defence in no way disproved those which were put forward by the prosecution. Both these sets of facts *were* facts. Those which were stated in the first instance as proving the guilt of the accused might legitimately cause suspicion to attach to her in an extraordinary degree. It was not wonderful that suspicion should have attached to her while only those facts were known. There was, however, this difference between the evidence for the prosecution and the evidence for the defence: the



evidence for the prosecution would lead the jury to *suspect* how the deceased lady had died; but the evidence for the defence had done more—it had brought them to *know* how she died. That was the difference, and it was a great one.

From that moment—from the moment when these meaning words were spoken—a change seemed to come over the proceedings in court. All seemed to wear a different aspect. It is hardly too much to say that at that moment a tide turned in the affairs of Gilbert and Gabrielle Penmore. Those who were well versed in what takes place in law-courts, and who knew, by long experience, much about judges and juries, whispered each other that the summing up was all in favour of the accused, and that the trial was virtually over. And so indeed it was. From point to point the judge went on examining the evidence, showing how clear it was in all things; how evident that the deceased lady had for some time been in the habit of swallowing certain quantities of opium; how, having commenced the practice under the desire to alleviate pain, and continued it, as many had done before her, because of the pleasurable sensations which the use of


the drug imparted, she had probably taken at last a larger dose than usual; and this, acting on a constitution especially liable to the evil influence of opium, had killed her. This was what the counsel for the defence had already told them, and in doing so, had only acted as the evidence which he had laid before them had justified him in doing.

Yes; the initiated ones were right: the trial was virtually over. As the judge went on, he seemed to carry the mass of his listeners with him. A great measure of excitement was astir in the place, though it could not be said in what way it was shown. Outward decency was maintained by all; but it may have been that all drew their breath harder than was their use, that heads were pressed more eagerly forward, and that there was some swaying and movement from side to side of this great crowd of sympathising human beings. Then there would be a sort of rustling and stir among them, which would express much; and now and again one of the multitude would whisper a hurried word into a neighbour's ear.

"Virtually over"—"summing up all favourable." There could be no doubt of it.

The judge paused, it is true, to censure the ease and readiness with which Cornelius Vampi had allowed himself to be persuaded into selling laudanum to the deceased: he did not shrink either from expressing his regret at finding that follies so long ago exploded as a belief in magic and the influences of the stars should still have attractions for sane and even educated men; but he in no respect considered that such perversion of judgment rendered those in whom it existed unfit to give evidence as to facts with which they had been mixed up. The evidence given—the testimony borne by Cornelius Vampi, and by the gentleman who seemed to be his disciple—was clear and consistent throughout. It was in no respect shaken by the severe and searching cross-examination which each of those witnesses had had to sustain; and it was as worthy of belief and as convincing in all respects as any that he, the judge, had ever heard in a court of justice.

“Virtually over.” From the moment when the old judge had passed from the consideration of the evidence for the prosecution to a review of that offered for the defence,—from the moment when he had stated openly that the testi-



mony brought forward to support the prosecution taught men to *suspect* how Diana Carrington had died, but that the evidence for the defence taught them to **KNOW** how she had died,—from that moment the trial was to all intents and purposes over, and with every additional word of that long summing up the nature of the verdict which must follow it became more and more certain, till at last the very barriers and restraints that held Gabrielle Penmore prisoner seemed actually to drop away from her as the old man spoke, and leave her free and unshackled.


The faces of men and women in the court wore an altered expression now; their attitude, so to speak, was more easy, their breath came more freely, as if the verdict were already given. Nay, the report that all was going well got beyond the limits of the court, and was carried to the very people in the street outside; and when, at last, the accents of the judge, which had latterly sunk very low, ceased altogether; when the jury, hardly waiting to be questioned, without retiring, almost without a word of consultation together, returned their verdict of "Not guilty"—no one in court but felt that the words were a more

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form—necessary, indeed, to be uttered, yet only dealing with a happy, but foregone, conclusion.

The tumult which followed this announcement that the troubles of Gabrielle were over, and that the cloud which had hung over her was in a moment dispelled, was not to be repressed. Even in the awful precincts of a court of justice it was impossible, for the moment, to restrain the long pent-up emotion which now demanded to have its way. From mouth to mouth the good news passed; and the words of the verdict echoed through the hall so quickly, that there was hardly any appreciable lapse of time before the cheers of the people without the court proclaimed to those within that the happy tidings had reached them also.

That day on which the trial of Gabrielle Penmore came to an end had been one of those which, beginning in great splendour, had become clouded over to some extent as the afternoon advanced. But now, when the short day-light was near its end, there was another change; the sun broke out once more before setting, and all things within its reach were in a moment turned to gold. It is not easy for



the sun-light to find its way into that grim court-house in the Old Bailey ; but there were crevices even here, through which certain of these golden rays managed to penetrate, and still more, there was a sudden increase of the volume of light which filled the building, and a change in the colour of that light which conveyed to the senses of all who were there assembled the knowledge that the mist-clouds had cleared away, and that once again the sun was shining down upon the world. There was no one present in the place at that time who failed to notice the change, and few who did not receive from it a distinct gratification. Those earth-born vapours, which had been spread between mankind and that which typifies to us the very glory of God, had passed away, and once again there was nothing but the blessed air of heaven between the World and the Sun which shone upon it.


Say what we may, we are all affected by such a change as this. Reason about it as you will, there is a special happiness which the sunshine brings with it wherever it appears. The sun shines, it is true, on the wicked as well as on the good. Vice, and crime, and pain, and sorrow cease not from off the world



when the sun's rays are on it. There are felons working out their life-long sentences, there are criminals plotting fresh deeds of infamy, and there are sick people writhing on their beds in agony, when the sun shines, just as there are when it is hidden from view. All this we know with that cold knowledge which is of the intellect alone. The heart will have nothing to say to these highly reasonable convictions, but cleaves in spite of them to a creed of its own—a creed in which there are more articles than we are most of us aware of, and one of the most prominent of which is this, that sunshine and happiness are closely allied, and that the clouds which darken the earth have some unexplained connection with the sorrows to which man is born.

At all events, there were not wanting those who, on this particular day of which we are speaking, felt that it was a good thing that the sun should have come out just at the moment when Gabrielle's innocence was proclaimed aloud.

Just as the trial which has occupied so many pages of this narrative was virtually over, before those last words which brought it




formally to an end were uttered, so now this story may be fairly stated to have reached its termination, although some few last words remain yet to be spoken before reader and author part company.

That verdict which once pronounced made Gabrielle a free woman, which threw open her prison-doors and left her at liberty once more, was hardly heard or understood by her whom it chiefly affected. As she stood to receive it, all things swam before her eyes, and the tumult in the court was to her a dim unreal thing, which she could not understand. She knew that all was well, but it was a joy that frightened her in its excess. The extremes had met, and she felt some such sickness coming over her as might have attended a different verdict. She could only look across to where she knew her husband was, with a strange half-smile; and she knew that he too was looking at her, and signing to her how happy they were. She knew, too, that all eyes were fixed upon her, and that there were even some of those quite near her who made as if they would have taken her by the hand. By and by she came also to know that there was a sudden silence in the

place, and that the old judge was speaking again.

She heard faintly, incompletely, as she saw. But still she knew that what the judge was saying was mingled with some distant sound of many voices cheering in the street without. Those about her told her that his lordship was addressing herself, and she tried hard to listen, but could only do so very imperfectly. There were ladies crying as the judge spoke, and some, as Gabrielle thought, were even carried out of court.

She listened, she strained her worn-out attention, and wondered within herself that she heard so little, or understood so ill. She did, however, understand something of what was said. She knew that the old man addressed her in words full of sympathy and respect. He told her that the verdict which had just been given, and in which he entirely concurred, not only set her free and exonerated her from the charge which had been brought against her, but that it reinstated her character, which had been so unhappily and unjustly assailed, leaving her without stain and without reproach. She had passed through a martyrdom—he could call it nothing else—and



come out of the ordeal victorious. He said something, too, about not wishing to detain her longer from the rest of which she must stand in such urgent need; and then—then—he ceased to speak, or she to hear—which was it?

They bore her away, for she had fainted, to a room where there was fresher air, and where it was very quiet. Gilbert was there too, and was bending over her when she came to herself. “Am I to go home?” she asked; for she was still hardly herself, and could not yet believe that she was free. That strange horrible nightmare which had lasted so long, was it possible that she had really awakened from it?

And now there came a messenger in search of Gilbert. The old judge had sent for him. If he could spare a few moments, the justice would be glad to see him in his own private room. Here the old man addressed the young one in terms of the warmest congratulation and sympathy. He spoke highly of the manner in which the defence had been conducted, and of Penmore’s courage in undertaking it. He even predicted great things for the young barrister’s future, promising that he would most certainly keep his eye upon him; and

making Gilbert promise in turn that if any occasion should ever offer in which he, the justice, could help him, he would always remember that he had a friend at hand who would only be too glad to serve him. The justice would not keep him now, as there were sacred claims upon every moment of his time, but begged that he might see him again very shortly.

As Penmore came out of the justice's room he fell at once into the hands of a group of attorneys who were waiting to catch him. These gentlemen—and Mr. Craft was among the foremost of them—were eager to congratulate him, and plied him with offers of employment whenever he should be ready to take it. Nay, one of them did actually—then and there—thrust a brief into his hand, retaining him upon the spot; and Gilbert found it in his pocket hours afterwards, where he had thrust it away, not knowing very well what he was doing.

“I'll tell you what, Mr. Penmore,” quoth Craft, as they were about to part company, “you were right about it, sir, and I was wrong. You've got the head of a lawyer, and, what I didn't think, the tongue of a lawyer too. And as to your foreign accent, it don't stand in

your way a bit; and after the first few sentences, and when you begin to warm to your work—hang me, if one thinks of it at all.”

Gilbert broke away from this worthy gentleman and his colleagues as quickly as he could. His heart was literally charged with pent-up feeling, and he could not speak. One thing, and one thing only, he could think of—it was his longing to be alone—alone with Gabrielle. Nothing but that could be thought of now; nothing else was tolerable.

It came at last—the time when they could be alone. For a while it was thought better that they should remain within the precincts of the court, the crowd being so great outside and likely to recognise them; and it was not till it had got to be quite dark that at last they were got out at a side door, and smuggled away in a cab. Ah, those cabs! always ready, their aid is called in in all sorts of emergencies, of joy and sorrow. The man who is summoned to a death-bed far away dashes off to the railway station in a cab; and he who after long years of absence returns home to loving friends hurries away from the terminus, as the other hurried *to* it—still in a cab. It was in a cab that Gabrielle was taken from her home to a

prison, and it is in a cab that she travels now from the prison to her home.

They are together and alone at last, and so we will for the time leave them. The heaviness endured for the night is past, and the morning joy has come. On such joy we have no right to intrude. What pen could deal with it, even were it right to attempt to do so? We can fancy their speechless happiness, but we will not speak of it. These two wished to be alone with their enormous joy; and surely they shall have their wish.

## CHAPTER XVIII.


### THE SUN COMES OUT.

THERE was one person, and one person only, to whom the issue of that trial with which we have so long been occupied, not only failed to bring any satisfaction, but caused, on the contrary, such acute and sudden anguish as might move our pity, if it did not excite rather our feelings of aversion and horror. Jane Cantanker remained still about the court after her evidence had been given, eagerly listening to and closely watching all that was said and done. She was there when Gilbert commenced his speech for the defence, and she smiled with contempt as she listened to its confident tone. She was there when Vampi gave his evidence; and as he spoke, and as the other witnesses for the defence told, each one, his tale, there crept in upon her heart a sort of doubt—arising there for the first time—about the issue of the trial. She would not entertain that doubt,



however. She put it away from her by main force. Had it not been evident all along how the thing was to end? It was hardly to be a trial at all. A conviction and a sentence,—all things pointing one way from the beginning. The reply of the prosecution gave her a sort of horrible comfort again. Yes, yes, it was as she had thought. That momentary doubt of hers had been an impertinence. How was it she had ever listened to it? The prosecutor knew better, of course; and how firmly he was demolishing that trumpery attempt at a defence!

But when the end drew near, and it began to be evident which way the verdict would go; when this merciless woman saw that the event was likely to turn out so differently from what she had anticipated, then indeed such rage and disappointment took possession of her as a tigress might feel in seeing the hunter who had destroyed her cubs escape out of her reach. She listened with a sort of incredulous eagerness. She questioned those about her, as if doubting the evidence of her own senses. She asked if it was possible that there was any chance for the prisoner—if it could be that they were going to suffer that murderess to escape?



The people whom she thus addressed stared at her in astonishment. They could not understand her. "I wish," said one man to whom she had spoken in such language,—“I wish I had a thousand pounds depending on her getting off; and as to ‘murderess,’ she’s no more a murderess than you are yourself; and perhaps not so much,” he added in a lower key, for the edification of a friend.


Jane Cantanker did not heed his words. She became more and more excited; and when, at last, the verdict was given, and she knew that her enemy was free, she lost all self-control, and screamed aloud that her mistress had been murdered, and that her death should be avenged, though it should be by her hands who spoke the words. In the tumult that, as we have seen, followed the giving of the verdict, her wild outcry was not heard. She fought and tore her way among the crowd to get out of the court; and those who came in her path fell on one side to let her pass, believing, as Cornelius Vampi had done before, that this terrible woman was mad.

Her violence, her menaces, her fury, continued when she got outside. She howled forth the story of her mistress’s wrongs in un-

intelligible words. She called on the bystanders to revolt against such gross and monstrous injustice, and to help her to take vengeance upon this woman, who was escaping before their very eyes : in a word, her demeanour was so wild, and her threats and denunciations were so alarming, that it became at last necessary for the police who were about the neighbourhood of the court to interfere.

The efforts of these to keep her quiet were in no degree successful. Indeed, she seemed now to be more violent than ever. She accused the police of a neglect of duty. They, like the rest, were playing her false. If they suffered that woman to go free, they would be letting loose a murderess on the world. While she was thus raving, it chanced that the same constable came up who had encountered her before outside the walls of Newgate. "You told me you would keep her safe," she cried at sight of the man, recognising him instantly; "you promised me that she should not escape; and now you are going to let her slip through your fingers. Good ones you are to look after the public safety!"

The constable who had seen her before talked aside with his colleagues.




"She's a poor mad creetur," he said, keeping his eye upon her. "I've seen her before; she's been on the lurk about here for some time past."

The men talked about it for some time, till a serjeant of police coming up, and hearing what they had to say, decided that it would be the wisest course to have her removed at once to some place of security.

"She'll be doing a mischief, otherwise, to somebody or other," he said; "or maybe to herself."

It seemed so likely, that no time was lost in carrying out the officer's suggestion; and the wretched woman was removed struggling and appealing to the crowd for succour to the last. No one interfered, however; for the report had got about that she was only a poor crazy woman; and indeed the people assembled in the Old Bailey considered that there was sufficient proof of that fact in what their own eyes and ears told them. Mad—evidently mad.


Alas, and were they right? Was this conclusion, arrived at by so many, a just one after all? Had these recent events turned her brain? The dwelling, as she had lately done,



upon one fixed idea, night and day incessantly—had that been too much for her? Her love for her mistress, her grief at the loss she had sustained, her wild unreasoning thirst for vengeance—had these conflicting passions, seething and working without intermission in her head, destroyed the balance of her mind, and upset, at last, her reason?

Such was the opinion of many persons well qualified to judge in such matters. It was the opinion of the magistrate before whom she was taken; it was the opinion of the medical officer who examined her; and it was the opinion of the authorities at the county lunatic asylum, to which she was at length consigned.

Poor unhappy creature! It was too true. The force of these terrible emotions, indulged in to an excess and to the exclusion of all other thoughts, the want of rest, the neglect of all things that mind and body need to keep them in health, had done their dreadful work; and this uneducated intellect had at length altogether given way. For some time Jane Cantanker remained a dangerous maniac, her case one of the worst in the asylum. The deranged mind retained, unhappily, that one fixed idea which lay at the root of its distur-



tion—the desire for vengeance. This varied not. Be the inconsistencies and follies which succeeded one another in the wretched woman's mind as various and incongruous as they might, there was always at least consistency, nay, something of coherency, in this. Her story never varied. Her mistress whom she had loved was dead—had been murdered by one Gabrielle Penmore, and must be speedily and completely avenged. She would repeat this story over to herself or to others a hundred times a day, and would concoct as many schemes for carrying her vengeance out, brooding over them by herself, or consulting others as to their feasibility whenever she could get a listener.

Among those who visited the asylum from time to time, seeking for tidings of its unhappy inmates, there was one lady who came only to inquire for this particular patient—Jane Cantanker—and who showed a marked anxiety to hear of her condition. She would ask eagerly at such times if there was any change in the state of the patient, if there was any prospect of amelioration, and begged that if there was any thing she could do that might make this patient's life less terrible, they would tell her,

that she might do it. She even threw out some hints about her wish to see this woman, if it might be possible. But the authorities when they heard of this—and the doctor, who knew the patient more than all—were peremptory in their refusal. For the lady who made this request was that same Gabrielle Penmore whom this dangerous lunatic was for ever denouncing in her ravings.

At last it seemed as if the excessive violence of this woman's frenzy was beginning to wear itself out; to wear itself out along with the body of the poor creature whom it had possessed; so that she got to be quieter altogether, and her violent fits got to be fewer and farther between. Gabrielle had one day taken that photograph of the late Miss Carrington, which has already done service in the course of this narrative, to the asylum, and had left it there to be shown, or not, to the patient, as the proper authorities might think best. It was decided at last to give it to her; and strangely enough, the possession of this portrait appeared to calm, rather than excite her. She would sit gazing upon it as a devotee might regard the image of some favourite saint, and would thrust it away into some

place of security if any one approached her, as though she feared that it might be taken from her.

But just in proportion as the mental condition of Jane Cantanker showed some signs of improvement, so did her bodily health give way and fail. The body's strength declined day by day, almost hour by hour; and those who knew well the phenomena of such cases foretold confidently that it would not be long before this woman died; but predicted also, that as the end drew near, the mind, whose faculties had been so terribly distorted, would surely be restored to reason.

And so, indeed, it proved. Imperfectly at first—just as in the sacred narrative the blind man, recovering his sight, “saw men as trees walking”—so imperfectly her slowly recovering reason received the true images of the events which had passed, but received them more completely, and saw them with less distortion, as continually the mind of the poor woman grew clearer, and gained with each succeeding day increase of strength. Till at the last it came about that she understood all and knew all, as the reader understands and knows; and praying that if it were possible



she might see Gabrielle before she died, was ministered to at the end of her days by the woman whom she had hated and persecuted, and yielded up the ghost with a face bending over her which might have been the face of an angel.

She died with that portrait of the mistress whom she had loved clasped firmly in her hand; and it was Gabrielle still who begged so earnestly that it might not be taken away from her.

What remains to be told?

Not much now. If the reader imagines that any of those remarks of a disparaging sort which were called forth in the course of the trial just reported, and which bore reference to the favourite pursuits of our friend Cornelius Vampi, served in any degree to lower the art mystic in the esteem of that illustrious man, I can only say that the reader is mistaken most grievously. True to his principles, as of old, that small observatory of his, which to some might seem a poor commonplace garret, is still to him an enchanted chamber; while that window from which he looks out upon the stars is still for him a door

of communication through which the messages reach him from the unseen world. For him the moon is a great deal more than a world of desolate mountains and barren valleys—a chaos of extinct volcanoes. For him the planets are something other than mighty spheres hanging in the void, sustained by forces whose nature man can but guess at, obedient in their movements to ascertained laws. For him there are still good influences and evil in the heavenly bodies, which act upon the destinies of the sons of men.

Ah, let him be. There are plenty of us wise ones who are altogether above these small childishnesses, or who indulge them in other and perhaps less harmless forms. There are plenty of us to represent the matter-of-fact interest; plenty given up to the accumulation of wealth, and other sensible practical pursuits. If we hold the art mystic but in light esteem, if we believe not in our friend's astrological pretensions—after all, we need not go to him; yet let us bear him no grudge nevertheless. For the benefit of those who are differently constituted, and who, like Mr. Lethwaite, take a certain interest in matters supernatural, it is only right that I should

mention that our sage may still be consulted even in these enlightened days, and will construct a horoscope for the reader to-morrow on the most approved principles, if the reader can only find him out.

Vampi is still the oracle of the poor in his neighbourhood, and is still able to do a vast deal of good among them. He is still gloriously happy; so much so, that he is obliged at times to have recourse, as of old, to the scrubbing-brush next his skin, to act as a kind of ballast. He is still fat, and florid, and healthy, with a countenance that it does you good to look on. There is but one thing changed about him, and that, after all, is connected entirely with his business arrangements. Since the day when he learned the fate of Diana Carrington he has ceased to keep poisons as part of his stock-in-trade; never will he sell poison again—be it opium or whatever else—to any human soul.

No, not even to that favoured friend and client, Mr. Julius Lethwaite, if he were—which is most unlikely—to make application for a dose. This gentleman has by no means given up the practice of consulting the oracle as interpreted by the gifted Cornelius, though

nothing will induce him to confess that he really believes in the astrologer's powers. His visits, however, to the observatory are as frequent as of old ; nor has even Jonathan Goodrich any thing to say against the philosopher since the great day when he did such glorious service to the cause of justice, and helped to save the life of Gabrielle Penmore.

Mr. Lethwaite's principles remain much the same as ever, and he still challenges mankind to produce before him a single action done with an entirely clean motive. "Love of approval," and "the desire to have a finger in the pie," are, according to him, the great mainsprings to which most so-called good actions are traceable. His own recent exertions in behalf of his friends, the hero and heroine of this tale, he has in every case traced back with considerable skill to motives which are, to him, entirely satisfactory in their unsatisfactoriness. He still meets occasionally with instances of conduct which it is difficult to reconcile with his theory ; and when after a while it came to his knowledge what Gabrielle had done in soothing the last hours of the woman who had so hated and injured her, then indeed he owned himself fairly puzzled.

"The exception which proves the rule," he said at last, evading the difficulty.

With regard to our friend's worldly affairs it must be acknowledged that they are still involved in great uncertainty, depending altogether upon the commercial issue of that recent "difficulty" in transatlantic regions, which even now leaves certain grave financial questions in a somewhat unsettled state. Whether that firm of Lethwaite and Goodrich will ever flourish in the City of London remains to be seen; and the uncertainty by which that question is surrounded will give the reader, it is hoped, an additional interest in American affairs. Meanwhile the senior partner in that at present mythical firm continues to drum his way to musical fame night after night, and has already attained to such perfection in his peculiar branch of art, that the occasions are now rare indeed on which his leader is obliged to check his ardour with even so much as a reproachful glance.

#### CONCLUSION.

The last words which are to bring this story to a close alone remain to be spoken; then we arrive at the end. If this tale, in-


stead of being written, had been told *vivâ voce* to a circle of listeners, there would, now that the crisis is past, be a sort of buzz of talk about the circumstances of the narrative, and certain questions would infallibly be asked by some of those who had heard the tale narrated. We must be ready now with answers to any such possible questions, though, in truth there remains not much more to be said.

There is a very old device of a fabulous and heraldic nature with which the reader is perhaps acquainted. It represents a bird, something of the eagle type, its head thrown back, and looking upward, its wings flung out in violent action, and the lower part of its body enveloped in the fire from which it is rising. This is the Phoenix, and the motto attached to the device is a very fine one. As you look upon the radiant creature, more glorious for the fiery trial through which it has passed, and rising magnificent out of the furnace, that motto, "*Ex flammis clarior*," seems to ring in your ears, wonderful in its appropriateness and beauty. "Brighter out of the flames." More splendid because of that fierce ordeal, you say to yourself; and then you think of trouble and its ennobling influences, of some

such case as this with which we have been all this time occupying ourselves.

For brighter, beyond a doubt, and more glorious have those two—that husband and wife whose fortunes we have followed so closely—emerged from the flame which has passed over them. That trouble is over now, and a season of great happiness follows it.

Not that either Gilbert Penmore or his wife were swift to recover from the after effects of the suffering which they underwent. They have come out of the fire, no doubt, and are safe ; but the flames have hurt them nevertheless. The flames have burnt them not a little, and they carry scars about them which tell of bitter sufferings endured in the furnace. It was long before either of them could bear even to think of what had been ; but in due time there came to her who had chiefly suffered a source of consolation so great that it seemed to obliterate the very memory of the past, and cause it to appear at last like some half-forgotten dream. In ministering to a creature wholly helpless, wholly dependent on her, Gabrielle the mother, absorbed in this new and wholesome interest, almost ceased to remember what she had suffered in the old



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time—as it seemed—when her child was not yet born to her:

But before that event took place many things happened to distract Gabrielle's attention from the memory of what she had gone through. Friends sprang up on every side for this new martyr. Comparative strangers, who could allege some such excuse as having once known her father or mother, came to call upon her; and some even who had no such excuse, and could only plead their anxiety to show some attention to one who had suffered in so uncommon a way. Immediately after the trial the wife of that old judge, in whom Gabrielle had felt such trust, came to her and asked leave to be her friend. She proved so always.

It has been mentioned in a previous chapter, that when Governor Descartes and his wife heard of their daughter's terrible position and of the peril that hung over her, they lost no time in making the necessary arrangements for a journey to England. The inevitable preparations and the journey itself, however, took some weeks; and happily for them the trial had come to a good end before they arrived. To see her parents again, after so




long a separation, was in itself no small delight to Gabrielle; and she saw them under happy circumstances. Between her and her mother there had till this time been an estrangement ever since Gabrielle's marriage. All such estrangement was now over, and the reconciliation between mother and daughter was complete. Trouble draws people wonderfully together; and we are not disposed to think severely of one who has newly escaped from a deadly peril. With her father Gabrielle had always been a favourite; and the old gentleman's delight at seeing his daughter again, and that under such circumstances, was very affecting to witness. The old governor talked very big about compensation, and actions for false imprisonment, and other legal proceedings, in connection with the late trial. But Gabrielle shook her head, and taking her father's hand in hers, besought him that the memory of that past horror might not be stirred again.

And now the time came when Gilbert too was to be rewarded for all his patient endurance and unrequited toil. That interview between him and the old judge, which took place immediately after the great trial was

over, was not without its results. It was talked about in law circles. The old judge and the young barrister were not alone at that time; all sorts of official and other persons having occasion to be in the room where the interview took place, waiting to speak with the justice on matters connected with his function. These spread the report far and wide of what had passed; not failing to exaggerate the praises which had been bestowed on the young lawyer, and the promises of assistance made by the worthy justice.

Such help, however, hardly came to be wanted. Gilbert Penmore had now, as the French say, given his proofs. He had shown that he could conduct a case—that he could keep his wits about him under circumstances the most trying that could possibly be conceived. It had been seen that his foreign accent was not a thing that need by any means stand in his way; a trifle, exciting some small amount of notice at first, but forgotten before a dozen sentences were spoken. Work poured in upon him faster than he could take it; and a time came when Gabrielle reminded him with a smile of what she had once—as the reader perhaps remembers—



said in jest, that she would certainly commit a crime some day or other, in order that he might conduct her defence and win a great name.

In short, this young couple soon began to prosper exceedingly. They did not remain in their old abode, where such heavy troubles had befallen them, but got away to new and pleasanter quarters, with which no painful memories were associated. It is only right, however, to mention that wherever they went the faithful Charlotte accompanied them, and made herself useful in a great variety of ways.

But why do I go on? The essential is told. Who reads the last words of a story, or listens to the final speeches of a play, when the box-keepers stand ready with their canvas coverings to throw over the silk and gilding, and Paterfamilias gets his young people together with prodigious noise, and wraps them well up before they face the night-air?

THE END.

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